

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MILITARY INTELLIGENCE
IN THE CAREER OF
THE PROPHET AT MEDINA

by
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In the name of Allāh, Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

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ABSTRACT

The biography of the Prophet, Muhammad, is now a well trodden path and a great deal of information is available to the modern reader. This thesis is the result of a new look at the extant sources with a view to exploring afresh some of the factors which underlie the military successes of the Prophet. Above all, an attempt has been made to establish the fact that espionage played a considerable part in the achievement of his goal.

The first chapter of this thesis deals with the Arabic terms used in the sources for espionage activities in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, whilst the second chapter is devoted to a discussion of the espionage practices adopted by the Arabs in the Jāhiliyya period. The third chapter is an attempt to establish the need on the part of the Prophet for intelligence and it contains discussion about the situation in which the Prophet found himself at the start of his military career. The enemy groups and the reasons for their enmity are treated in detail.

The fourth chapter begins with an account of the sources of intelligence available to the Prophet in the fight against his enemies. A brief account of his intelligence activities during the hijra which enabled him to start his career at Medina then follows. Discussion of the career of the Prophet is divided into two sections: the external and internal fronts. On the external front, particular attention is paid to the Prophet's victory at Badr and to the decisive role played by espionage in this event. An account of the Prophet's achievements immediately

before and after the battle of Uhud is also given. An attempt is then made to establish the fact that Medina could have been defended in the battle of al-Khandiq only by means of espionage. Thereafter, the events leading up to al-Hudaybiyya are analysed and it is argued here that the Meccans were forced to come to the negotiating table as the result of a successful intelligence mission. The conquest of Mecca which followed is seen here as the height of the Prophet's career in the field of intelligence and it is suggested that espionage played a major role in forcing the Meccans to accept the supremacy of the Prophet. Finally, on the internal front, it is argued that espionage played no minor role in subjugating the Prophet's overt and hidden enemies.

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M. Suleman

TRANSLITERATION TABLE

The system of transliteration used in this thesis is that adopted by the Encyclopaedia of Islam (2nd edition) with the following modifications: ج = j, ق = q. Detailed table of transliteration is as follows.

Consonants

ء	'
ب	b
ت	t
ث	th
ج	j
ح	h
خ	kh
د	d
ذ	dh
ر	r
ز	z
س	s
ش	sh
ص	s
ض	d
ط	t
ظ	z
ع	'
غ	gh
ف	f
ق	q
ل	l
م	m

Consonants

ن	n
و	w
هـ	h (omitted at the end of the word)
ي	y
ال	al

Vowels

Long:

اَ)	
اِ)	
اُ)	ā
اَ)	
اِ)	
اُ)	

او	ū
اي	ī

Short:

اَ	a)	
اِ	u)	omitted at the end of the word
اُ	i)	

Doubled:

يَّ	iy
وَّ	uw

Diphthongs:

او	aw
اي	ay

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Maps (in back pocket)

- I Arabia in the 7th century showing tribes,
settlements and trade and pilgrim routes
- Ia Enlargement of the map of the area of Mecca
and Medina

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE THESIS

<u>Aghānī</u>	Abu'l-Faraj 'Alī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Asbahānī, <u>Kitāb al-Aghānī</u> (1925; reprinted Cairo, n.d.)
<u>Amwāl</u>	Abū 'Ubayd Qāsim b. Sallām, <u>Kitāb al-Amwāl</u> , ed. M.K.Harrās (Cairo, 1389/1969).
<u>Ayyām</u>	Muḥammad Aḥmad Jād al-Mawlā, 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī and Muḥammad Abu'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, <u>Ayyām al-'Arab fi'l Jāhiliyya</u> (Cairo, 1365/1946).
<u>Azraqī</u>	Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Aḥmad al-Azraqī, <u>Akhbār Makka wa mā jā'a fīhā min al-Āthār</u> , ed. Rushdī al-Ṣāliḥ Malhas (Madrid, n.d.).
<u>Bakrī</u>	'Abdallāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Bakrī, <u>Mu'jam mā Ista'jam min Asmā' al-Bilād wa'l-Mawādi'</u> , (Cairo, 1945-51).
<u>Bidāya</u>	Abu'l-Fidā Ismā'īl b. 'Umar Ibn Kathīr, <u>al-Bidāya wa'l-Nihāya</u> (Beirut, 1966).
<u>BSOAS</u>	<u>Bulletin of School of Oriental and African Studies</u>
"Chronology"	J.M.B. Jones, "The Chronology of the Maghāzī: A Textual Study", <u>BSOAS</u> , XIX (1957), pp.245-80.
<u>EB</u>	<u>Encyclopaedia Britannica</u> (Chicago, 1969).
<u>EI²</u>	<u>The Encyclopaedia of Islam</u> (2nd edition) (Leiden, 1960).
<u>EJ</u>	<u>Encyclopaedia Judaica</u> (Jerusalem, 1972).
<u>Fayrūzabādī</u>	Muḥammad b. Yahyā al-Fayrūzabādī, <u>al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt</u> (Beirut, 1371/1952).

- Futūh Abu'l-Ḥasan Aḥmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhurī, Futūh al-Buldān, ed. R.M. Ridwān (Cairo, 1350/1932).
- Gindī 'Alī Muḥammad el-Gindī, "Martial Poetry among the 'Arabs in the Jāhiliyya", unpublished Ph.D. thesis (University of London, 1953).
- Glubb, Conquests J.B. Glubb, The Great Arab Conquests, (Englewood Cliffs, 1964).
- Ḥasan Ḥasan Ibrāhīm Ḥasan, Tārīkh al-Islām (Cairo, 1964-65).
- Haykal Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, Ḥayāt Muḥammad. Trans. I.R. al-Fārūqī as: The Life of Muḥammad (n.p., 1976).
- I. Hishām 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām, Sīrat al-Nabī, ed. Maḥmūd Sayyid al-Taḥṭāwī (Cairo, 1346 A.H.)
- I. Jawzī Abu'l-Faraj 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Alī ibn al-Jawzī, Sifat al-Ṣafwa (Hyderabad Deccan, 1355 A.H.)
- I. Khaldūn 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Khaldūn, Kitāb al-'Ibar wa Dīwān al-Mubtadā wa'l-Khabar (Būlāq, 1284 A.H.).
- I. Khayyāt Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, Tārīkh, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Damascus, 1968).
- 'Iqd Aḥmad ibn 'Abd Rabbih, al-'Iqd al-Farīd (Cairo, 1346/1928).
- Iqtibās Maḥmūd Shīṭ Khaṭṭāb, Jamāl al-Dīn 'Alī Maḥfūz and 'Abd al-Laṭīf Zā'id, Iqtibās al-Nizām al-'Askarī fī 'Abd al-Nabī (Doha, Qatar, 1400 A.H.)
- Irshād Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Qaṣṭallānī, Irshād al-Sārī li Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (Būlāq, 1323-7).
- Isāba Aḥmad b. 'Alī b. Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, al-Isāba fī Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba (Baghdad, n.d.).

- I. Sa'd Muḥammad b. Sa'd, al-Tabaqāt al-Kubrā (Beirut, 1398/1978).
- Istī'āb Yūsuf b. 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Barr, al-Istī'āb fī Ma'rifat al-Ashāb (Baghdad, n.d.).
- Jalālayn Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Maḥillī and Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm (Cairo, 1326 A.H.).
- JE The Jewish Encyclopaedia (New York, 1901).
- JESHO Journal of Social and Economic History of the Orient.
- JRAS The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
- Kāmil 'Alī b. Muḥammad ibn al-Athīr, Kitāb al-Kāmil fi'l Tārīkh (Leiden, 1866) vols. I & II
- Kanz 'Alī b. Ḥusām al-Dīn al-Muttaqī, Kanz al-'Ummāl fī Sunan al-Aqwāl wa'l-Af'āl (Hyderabad Deccan, 1363-82 A.H.).
- Lane E.W. Lane, An Arabic English Lexicon (London, 1863-93).
- Lisān Muḥammad b. Mukarram ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-'Arab (Beirut, n.d.).
- Maqrīzī Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Maqrīzī, Imtā' al-Isma' (Qatar, n.d.).
- Mishkāṭ Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī, Mishkāṭ al-Maṣābiḥ, ed. Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī (Damascus, 1961-2).
- Muḥīt Buṭrus al-Bustānī, Muḥīt al-Muḥīt (Beirut, 1977).

- Muslim Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Qushayrī, al-Jamī‘ al-Sahīh (Cairo, 1377 A.H.)
- Musnad Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal al-Shaybānī, al-Musnad, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo, 1948-56).
- MW The Muslim World
- Naqā'id Abū ‘Ubayda Ma‘mar b. al-Muthannā, Kitāb al-Naqā'id: Naqā'id Jarīr wa'l-Farazdaq, ed. A.A. Bevan (Leiden, 1905-9).
- Nayl Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Shawkānī, Nayl al-Awtār fī Sharḥ Muntacā al-Akhbār (Cairo, 1357 A.H.).
- Nihāya Mubārak b. Muḥammad ibn al-Athīr, al-Nihāya fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth wa'l-Athar (Cairo, 1318-22).
- al-Qur'ān The numbers of the chapters and the verses are quoted from Yūsuf ‘Alī's translation of al-Qur'ān. After al-Qur'ān the first figure shows the number of the sūra and the second figure shows the verse. Example: al-Qur'ān III:12. The translation of the verses is quoted from the same source unless otherwise stated.
- Samhūdī ‘Alī b. ‘Abdallāh al-Samhūdī, Wafā' al-Wafā' bi Akhbār Dār al-Muṣṭafā (Cairo, 1326 A.H.).
- Siyar Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Sarkhasī, Sharḥ Kitāb al-Siyar al-Kabīr li Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (Cairo, 1957).
- Sihāh Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Rāzī, Mukhtār al-Sihāh, ed. Maḥmūd Khāṭir Beg (Cairo, 1345/1926).

- Tabarī Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk, ed. Muḥammad Abu'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1960-69).
- Tabarī, Taf. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī, Jāmi' al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān (Cairo, 1321 A.H.).
- Tanbīh 'Alī b. Ḥusayn al-Mas'ūdī, al-Tanbīh wa'l-Ashrāf (Leiden, 1893) and (Baghdad, 1938), the one published from Leiden is quoted as Tanbīh (L) and the one published from Baghdad is quoted as Tanbīh (B).
- 'Urwa 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, Maghāzī Rasūl Allāh, compiled and ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A'zamī (Riyādh, 1981).
- Usūl Mubārak b. Muḥammad ibn al-Athīr, Jāmi' al-Usūl fī Aḥādīth al-Rasūl, ed., 'Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā'ūt ([Damascus?], 1969-73).
- 'Uyūn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh ibn Sayyid al-Nās, 'Uyūn al-Athar fī Funūn al-Maghāzī wa'l-Shamā'il wa'l-Siyar (Cairo, 1356 A.H.).
- Wāqidī Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī, Kitāb al-Maghāzī, ed. Marsden Jones (London, 1966).
- Wasīṭ Muṣṭafā Ibrāhīm and others, al-Mu'jam al-Wasīṭ (Cairo, 1960-62).
- Watt, Medina W.M. Watt, Muhammad at Medina (Oxford, 1956).
- Watt, Society W.M. Watt, Islam and the Integration of Society, (London, 1961).

INTRODUCTION

From Ibn Ishāq to the present day the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad,⁽¹⁾ has been a subject of countless works. Almost every writer on the Prophet has written about his life or a certain aspect of his life from a different point of view and therefore thousands of justifications have been ascribed to these works. In this situation it seems very difficult to find any justification for yet another work based on the same existing material but luckily we have found one. According to the information available to the present author, no previous scholar, Muslim or non-Muslim, has attempted so far to illuminate the intelligence aspect of the Prophet's struggle against his enemies during his Medinan career. Although it is mentioned in all the early available sources such as the Sīra of Ibn Ishāq and the Kitāb al-Maghāzī of al-Wāqidī and in later biographies such as Muir's The Life of Muhammad,⁽²⁾ Margoliouth's Mohammed and the Rise of Islam,⁽³⁾ and Watt's Muhammad at Medina⁽⁴⁾ and Muhammad: Prophet and

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1. This writer is accustomed to pronouncing with the Prophet the formula 'peace be upon him' and with his companions the formula 'God be pleased with them'. It is extremely cumbersome to include these formulae in the text because they would have sometimes occurred several times on a single page. They may, therefore, be considered as understood.
 2. Edinburgh, 1912 .
 3. New York, 1905 .
 4. Oxford, 1956 .

Statesman⁽¹⁾ and others that the Prophet on many occasions sent spies against the enemy, no scholar has attempted to create an independent work concerning his intelligence activities. Since a mere few lines and clues cannot possibly reflect the restlessness and watchfulness of a man whose life and mission was constantly in danger both from inside and outside his community, this study has been undertaken.

The most authentic source for the life of Muhammad is al-Qur'ān. Foster produced "An Autobiography of Mohammed"⁽²⁾ based on the material found in al-Qur'ān about Muhammad and the events of his life but it is fragmentary as it must inevitably be, because most of the expeditions undertaken by the Prophet are not mentioned in al-Qur'ān. Therefore we have to search for other sources to provide information on the life of Muhammad. The earliest followers of the Prophet like the first four caliphs who had taken part in most of the events which took place during his career as a prophet did not write the biography of their leader, because after his death they were engaged, as Tor Andrae writes, as responsible leaders in the military state and therefore had other things to do rather than relating the stories concerning the activities of Muhammad.⁽³⁾ These followers were the most appropriate persons to write an honest biography of

1. Oxford, 1978 .

2. MW, XXVI (1936), pp.130-52. See also R. Blachère, Le Problème de Mahomet (Paris, 1952).

3. Tor Andrae, Muhammad: the Man and his Faith, tr. Theophil Menzel (London, 1936), pp.27-8.

their leader because they, in spite of their firm belief in his prophethood, had witnessed his drawbacks as a human being and his limits concerning his relationship to God.⁽¹⁾ A biography of Muhammad written by any one of them would have been the biography of a man who possessed the gift of prophethood rather than a study of hero worship.⁽²⁾ It is a pity that these followers neither themselves wrote a biography of the Prophet nor encouraged or appointed someone from the junior companions of the Prophet to work on this project under their supervision. The lack of such an attempt had serious consequences.

The vacuum, however, did not last very long and as Ilse Lichtenstadler asserts,

'at a comparatively early time the need was felt for collecting every bit of information about the Prophet'.⁽³⁾

The people began to collect and relate the stories of the wars and raids of the Prophet in the style in which they told the stories of the wars and raids of the pre-Islamic Arabs which are

1. As Buhl writes,

"His (the Prophet's) real personality was revealed quite openly with its limitations; his strength and his knowledge were limited".

EI², III, p.656;

'and apart from the revelation with which he was favoured, he was a man like any other and several times refers to the fact that he will die.'

Ibid., III, p.657.

2. There are many examples in the sources of close associates of the Prophet criticising his actions, as 'Umar is said to have criticised the truce of al-Hudaybiyya in 6 A.H.

called Ayyām al-‘Arab. Although we do not fully agree with Arthur Jeffery⁽¹⁾ that the aim of the generation that worked at the biography of the Prophet was to construct the picture as it ought to have been rather than to know the past as it was, it does not require much mental effort to conclude that when a serious topic on the wars and raids of the Prophet became the object of the story tellers what sort of material would have been produced. It is a fact that many gasas crept in and a tendency from simple and factual data towards glorification manifested itself. Efforts were made to glorify the first decade of Islam and colours were added to make the picture more beautiful than the human greatness of the Prophet.⁽²⁾ In this way the picture of the Prophet was so distorted that the responsible members of the Muslim community became worried at the situation and ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr (23-94 A.H.),

(I. Hishām, II, pp.215-6) and the Prophet's taking part in the funeral service of ‘Abdallāh b. Ubayy in 9 A.H. (Wāqidī, III, pp.1057-8).

2. "Arabic and Islamic Historiography", MW, XXXV (1945), p.128.

1. "The Quest of Historical Muḥammad", MW, XVI (1926), pp.340-1.

2. See al-Nowaihi, "Towards a Re-Evaluation of Muḥammad: Prophet and Man", MW, LX (1970), pp.300-313 who writes,

"When those scholars (non-Muslims) differ with us, it is not always they who are in the wrong and who have to change their view. For just as we fabricated those fables about the birth of our Prophet, we have indulged in certain exaggerations and outright inventions regarding his qualities. We have claimed for him a perfection which is not given to any human, not even the prophets. If we ever aspire to have a saner and truer estimation of him, one that is capable of discovering his real and demonstrable virtues, our point of departure must be the realization that neither he himself claimed perfection, nor did the Qur'ān claim it for him". P.310.

who was a cousin of the Prophet, stepped into the field and wrote down his information on the career of the Prophet and hence became the pioneer of the literature concerning the life of the Prophet.⁽¹⁾ Although his notes are the earliest documents on Islamic history that have come down to us through later sources, these are anecdotal, fragmentary and with hardly any framework.⁽²⁾ Later sources have preserved for us some traditions from 'Urwa and Muṣṭafā al-A'zamī has now compiled them in a book called Maghāzī Rasūl Allāh which is one of our sources. A later scholar, Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī (d. 124 A.H.) set the lines of the historical studies giving the first definite framework of the Sīra, as Dūrī asserts, to be elaborated later in details only, and there is little attempt at glorification.⁽³⁾

The work of these two scholars and of others of their contemporaries, mentioned by Guillaume,⁽⁴⁾ such as Shurahbīl b. Sa'd, 'Āsim b. 'Umar b. Qatāda (d.c. 120 A.H.), 'Abdallāh b. Abī Bakr b. Muḥammad (d. 130 or 135 A.H.) Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Rahmān b. Nawfal (d. 131 or 137 A.H.) did not survive independently. But fragments of the works of Wahb b. Munabbih (34-110 A.H.) (written on papyri in 228 A.H.) and Mūsā b. 'Uqba (d. 141 A.H.) have survived but are practically of no use to the present

1. Ḥājjī Khalīfa, Kashf al-Zunūn (Istanbul, 1360-2 A.H.), p.1747.

2. For details see A.A. Dūrī, "Al-Zuhrī" BSOAS, XIX (1957), pp.1-12.

3. Ibid., p.8.

4. A. Guillaume, The Life of Muḥammad: A Translation of Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh (Lahore, 1955), pp.XIV-XVI.

study. Our main sources, therefore, are the works of later scholars such as Muḥammad b. Ishāq (d. 151 A.H.) and Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Wāqidī (d. 207 A.H.) etc. Ibn Ishāq's work Sīrat Rasūl Allāh has come down to us in the revision of 'Abd al-Malik b. Hishām (d. 218 A.H.) and is the first coherent biography of the Prophet. He compiled his work from the material which was in circulation in his lifetime and tried to distinguish facts from fiction. In spite of his valiant attempt, as Tor Andrae asserts, he did not entirely succeed in carrying out his critical sifting of the material.⁽¹⁾ Our other main sources like al-Wāqidī's Kitāb al-Maghāzī (book of wars), Muḥammad b. Sa'd's (d. 230 A.H.) book al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā (the great classes) and Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī's (d. 310 A.H.) Tārīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk (the history of the prophets and kings) have their merits and demerits as does the work of Ibn Ishāq but they share one common characteristic; amongst the various heroes whom they praise individually they all share in the glorification of the Prophet.⁽²⁾

Many Western scholars have criticized the material on the Prophet's life included in the above mentioned works and conclude

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1. Guillaume, op. cit., p.58.
 2. For further information on the above mentioned works see Bayard Dodge, "The Subjects and Titles of Books Written in the First Four Centuries of Islam", Islamic Culture, XXVII, pp.525-40; Ignaz Goldziher, "Characteristics of Arabic Literature from the Beginning to the End of Umayyad Period", trans. Joseph Somogyi, Islamic Culture, XXXI, pp.1-16, 178-90 and by the same author "Arabic Literature during the

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that it is unreliable for constructing a reliable biography of the Prophet. Schacht writes,

"A considerable part of the standard biography of the Prophet in Medina, as it appeared in the second half of the second century A.H. was of very recent origin and is therefore without independent historical value." (1)

On the other hand, some scholars like Watt have adopted a positive view and accept the traditional historical material as true, with the exception that where there is internal contradiction it is to be rejected and where tendential shaping is suspected it is as far as possible to be corrected. (2) For the sake of the present study we have no alternative but to accept the latter point of view because otherwise it would come to a standstill right at the beginning. If we look at the sources from this stance we find, as Wendell writes, that

"the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad is reasonably well documented from the hijra of 622 A.D. until his death, (3)

a period which is the field of the present study.

'Abbāsīd Period", trans. Joseph Somogyi, Islamic Culture, XXXI, pp.292-313; Joseph Somogyi, "The Development of Arabic Historiography", Journal of Semitic Studies, III, pp.373-87; Francesco Gabrieli, "Arabic Historiography", trans. M.S. Khan, Islamic Studies, XVIII, pp.81-95.

1. Joseph Schacht, "A Revaluation of Islamic Tradition^s", RAS (1949), p.151.
2. W.M. Watt, Muḥammad at Mecca (Oxford, 1953), p.XIV; Watt, Medina, p.336.
3. C. Wendell, "The Pre-Islamic Period of Sīrat al-Nabī", MW, LXII (1972), p.12.

CHAPTER I

TERMINOLOGY

After these brief remarks about the justification of the present study and some introductory notes let us move forward. Our concern in this chapter is to look into early Arabic sources with a view to finding out the terms used for spies and scouts in the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods. These terms are ṭalī'a, sariyya, rabī'a, sabaqa, shayyifa, 'ayn, jāsūs, and nadhīr or mundhir.

The sources which use these terms were compiled, except for al-Qur'ān, in the second, third or even later centuries of the Islamic era. It is, therefore, difficult to decide whether these terms were actually used in the periods in question or whether they were imposed back into the past by our historians.⁽¹⁾ Because we have no way out of this difficult situation we have, therefore, to depend on the available material in the present study.

Ṭalī'a

According to Nihāya,⁽²⁾ al-Qaṣṭallānī,⁽³⁾ Lisān,⁽⁴⁾ Ibn Abi'l

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1. Except for rabī'a, 'ayn, jāsūs and nadhīr or mundhir which are used in the pre-Islamic and the early Islamic poetry or in al-Qur'ān as will be shown later.
 2. III, p.46.
 3. Irshād, V, p.67.
 4. VIII, p.237.

-Ḥadīd,⁽¹⁾ al-Bahrānī,⁽²⁾ Maqāyīs al-Lughā,⁽³⁾ Muhīt⁽⁴⁾ and Wasīt⁽⁵⁾, a man or a party of men sent out to obtain secret information about the enemy is called a ṭalī'a. Lane defines this term in some detail as follows,

"Ṭalī'a of an army (a scout; and a party of scouts;) a man or a party of men, that is sent, and goes forth to obtain knowledge of the state, or case, or tidings, or of the secret, or of the inward, or intrinsic, or secret, state, or circumstances, of the enemy like the jāsūs; a man or a party of men sent before any other party to acquaint himself, or themselves, with the tidings, or state, or case of the enemy".⁽⁶⁾

Lane further says that this term is applied to a single man or a number of men when they are together but limits the numbers to three and four because Imām Muḥammad al-Shaybānī has done so.⁽⁷⁾

On another occasion Lane says that three and four and the like are termed ṭalī'a.⁽⁸⁾

These definitions are similar except the numbers to which this term can be applied. Lane tries to limit the numbers of

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1. Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha, ed. Muḥammad Abu 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1387/1978), XV, p.90.
 2. Sharḥ Nahj al-Balāgha (Tehrān, 1378-84 A.H.), IV, p.378.
 3. Aḥmad b. Fāris b. Zakariyyā, Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughā, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Cairo, 1969-72), III, p.420.
 4. P.554.
 5. II, p.568.
 6. Lane, p.1870.
 7. Ibid.
 8. Ibid., p.1356.

such a party to three and four while the rest of the authorities quoted above do not mention such limits. If we examine the sources we find that the authorities other than Lane have the support of those who apply this term to more than four persons. Here are a few examples of this sort.

Before the battle of Uhud in 3 A.H. a Muslim named Salma b. Salāma went out of Medina and came across a ṭalī'a of the Meccans comprising ten horsemen.⁽¹⁾

During the siege of Medina in 5 A.H., Usayd b. Ḥudayr of the Anṣār was once on duty to guard the trench, which had been dug around Medina as a defensive measure, when he saw a ṭalī'a of the enemy consisting of one hundred soldiers under the command of 'Amr b. al-'Ās.⁽²⁾

When the Prophet set out towards Mecca to perform the lesser pilgrimage in 6 A.H., but he could not enter Mecca and returned after concluding a treaty with the Quraysh known as the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya, he sent 'Ubād b. Bashr in advance as ṭalī'a which consisted of twenty horsemen.⁽³⁾

During the same expedition when the Quraysh resolved not to let the Prophet enter Mecca, they sent Khālīd b. al-Walīd to al-Ghamīm with other horsemen. According to Abū Yūsuf, when Muḥammad advanced from 'Usfān he met Khālīd who was there as a ṭalī'a of the Quraysh.⁽⁴⁾ Al-Bukhārī records that the Prophet

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1. Wāqidī, I, p.208; Maqrīzī, p.115. (عشرة افراس طليعة)
 2. Wāqidī, II, pp. 464-5. (فاذا طليعة من المشركين مائة فارس)
 3. Ibid., II, p.574. (فقد منه امامه طليعة في خيل المسلمين عشرين فارساً)
 4. Abū Yūsuf, Kitāb al-Kharāj (Būlāq, 1302 A.H.) p.128.

told his companions that Khālīd along with other horsemen was at al-Ghamīm as the talī'a of the Quraysh.⁽¹⁾ Wāqidī mentions that Khālīd was accompanied by two hundred horsemen while he was at al-Ghamīm⁽²⁾, which means that such a large party was termed talī'a by the Prophet. Al-Bukhārī⁽³⁾ and al-Zamakhsharī tell us that when the Prophet reached al-Ḥudaybiyya by dodging Khālīd the latter went to Mecca with this news and warned them about the forthcoming danger.

These examples clearly indicate that a party of any number can be termed talī'a and it is appropriate not to limit the use of this term to a number up to three or four as Lane does.

Let me now cite some examples of the use of this term from different sources to show that it denotes spies and scouts. We begin with the story of Zuhayr b. Jadhīma, a leader of the Banū 'Abs of the Banū Ghaṭafān in pre-Islamic times. It is appropriate to give a detailed account of this story because it contains terms other than talī'a with which we have to deal later on.

The general outline of the story, culled from various sources, is as follows. Shās b. Zuhayr was on his way home after visiting al-Nu'mān, the king of al-Ḥīra. When he was passing

1. Irshād, IV, p.443; see also Kanz, X, p.309.

2. Wāqidī, II, p.580.

3. Irshād, IV, p.443.

4. Maḥmūd b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, al-Fā'iḳ fī Gharīb al-Ḥadīth, ed. Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī and Muḥammad Abu 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1945-8), I, p.321.

through the territory of the Banū Ghanī he was attacked and killed, most likely by some member of that tribe. Zuhayr claimed qisās from the Banū Ghanī and their confederates the Banū 'Āmir; this was denied. Zuhayr then planned to locate the murderer of his son by means of espionage before taking further steps. He hired the services of a woman and sent her to the Banū Ghanī with plenty of meat to sell among them. He advised her to conceal her identity and to try to find out the murderer of his son in the course of her business activities by talking to people. She acted as directed and luckily happened to meet the wife of the murderer. This woman told the meat seller secretly, but in a boastful manner, that her husband Riyāh b. al-Ashal had murdered Shās, son of Zuhayr. This information was passed on to Zuhayr who attacked the Banū Ghanī and there was much bloodshed.

After some time Zuhayr went to attend the market of 'Ukāz. There he met Khālīd b. Ja'far of the Banū Hawāzin and a quarrel broke out between them over the recent bloodshed. Then they returned to their respective tribes and managed to prepare them for a combat with each other.

Tumādir, the wife of Zuhayr, belonged to the enemy tribe. To reap benefit from this situation Khālīd sent her brother Hārith b. 'Āmir as a spy. ('ayn)⁽¹⁾ to get information about the intentions and strength of Zuhayr. When Hārith met his relatives, one of his nephews, Qays b. Zuhayr, found out about the real

1. فارسله خالد عينا Kāmil, I, p.413; see pp.26-32

for detailed discussion about the meanings of this term.

mission of his uncle and told his father about it. Zuhayr decided to arrest his brother-in-law because he was a talī'a⁽¹⁾ and ordered his sons to do so. Tumādir intervened to save her brother from maltreatment and Ḥārith was permitted to leave, on the promise that he would not speak to anybody about their secrets. He then started on his homeward journey. When he came near to a gathering of Khālīd's companions he put his milk skin under a tree and addressed it, "O tree, drink from this milk". The people noticed his action and thought that he wanted to convey some information to them but he seemed to be under oath not to speak to anybody about that particular matter. They came to the tree and tasted the milk which they found was sweet. They thought that by his action Ḥārith wanted to tell them that their enemy was near at hand and there was the prospect of booty.

Having this clue, six of their riders, including Khālīd, went ahead to reconnoitre the land with a view to finding some definite information. These riders were noticed by Usayd b. Jadhīma who told his brother Zuhayr about them. Zuhayr did not believe his brother because he had not received such information from his spy (rabī'a).⁽²⁾ Consequently the enemy on the basis of the information gathered by their riders attacked Zuhayr and succeeded in killing him.⁽³⁾

1. ان هذا الحمار لطيفة عليكم Aghānī, XI, p.85.

2. كان لزهير ربة. Ibid, XI, p.86; see pp. 21-5 for detailed discussion about the meaning of this term.

3. 'Id, III, pp.304-5; Aghānī, II, pp.85-7; Kāmil, I, pp.411- 4; Ayyām, pp.236-9.

This story is a fine example of espionage and counter espionage in pre-Islamic Arabia. Three terms, 'ayn, talī'a and rabī'a, are used in it to denote spies. At the moment we are dealing with the term talī'a which is used for Ḥārith, brother of Tumādir, who was sent forth by Khālīd. He went towards Zuhayr on a spying mission and came back with useful information which he conveyed to Khālīd and his party in a codified form because of his oath.

Relating the story of al-Ḥawfazān, Abū 'Ubayda says that the Banū Bakr b. Wā'il intended to make a raid on the gathering of the Banū Riyāḥ b. Yarbū' and the Banū Tha'laba. When the latter came to know the intentions of the Banū Bakr they sent two riders as talī'a⁽¹⁾ in one direction and another two as rabī'a⁽²⁾ in the other direction. After some time the riders who were sent as rabī'a came back and reported that they had not noticed anyone nearby. On the third day the riders who were sent out as talī'a came back with the report that the enemy was at al-Qasūmiyya. Then they sent out another talī'a⁽³⁾ who came back with the news that the enemy had reached the valley of Dhū Ṭulūḥ⁽⁴⁾

This is a part of the story of al-Ḥawfazān in which the term talī'a has been used twice for the persons who were sent out to locate the enemy and returned to report their findings to their leaders.

1. (ثبت بنو رياح فارسين طليعة) Naqā'id, I, p.49.

2. (ثبت بنو شعلبة فارسين) Ibid., I, p.49.

3. (ثم بعثنا طليعة اخرى) Ibid., I, p.50.

4. Ibid., I, pp.49-50.

This term is also applied to those spies sent out by the Prophet or by his enemies during his campaigns. Some such examples have been mentioned earlier and here are a few more.

When the Prophet was on his way to intercept the caravan of Abū Sufyān in the year 2 A.H. before the battle of Badr he is said to have sent 'Adī b. Abi'l-Zaghbā and Basbas b. 'Amr as spies. They went to a certain well and made inquiries about Abū Sufyān. These spies who are termed talī'a⁽¹⁾ by I. Sa'd were sent forth by the Prophet and came back to report to him when they found information about the whereabouts of the caravan of Abū Sufyān.⁽²⁾

Again, before the start of the battle of Badr the Meccans sent 'Umayr b. Wahb towards the camp of the Prophet's army to obtain information about its numbers and equipment. It is stated that 'Umayr went round the Prophet's camp and went back to the Meccans with the report that their enemy was approximately three hundred men strong. This spy is also termed talī'a by I. Sa'd.⁽³⁾

Again, when the Prophet was on his way to Dūma in the year 4 A.H. he sent out a spy who belonged to the Banū 'Udhra. It is stated that the spy returned after he came to know the whereabouts of the enemy and reported it to the Prophet. This spy is termed talī'a by Wāqidī.⁽⁴⁾

1. (بعث عدي بن أبي الزغباء و يسير بن عمرو الجعفي طليعة يوم بدر فأتيا الماء)
I. Sa'd, II, p.24.

2. Ibid., II, p.24.

3. (ويعتوه طليعة ليحذر أصحاب رسول الله) Ibid., IV, p.199.

4. Wāqidī, I, p.403.

These examples substantiate the definition of ṭalī'a given by the authorities,⁽¹⁾ namely that it was applied by the Arabs to a scout or a party of scouts who used to go out on spying missions.

Sariyya

According to Lane, sariyya is a portion of an army. It originally meant marching by night and was afterwards applied also to marching by day.⁽²⁾ Sometimes this term denotes spies as Lane says, when he defines ṭalī'a. According to Lane, up to three and four spies are called ṭalī'a and more than that are termed sariyya.⁽³⁾ However, Lane goes on to say that it is related of the Prophet that he sent a single person as sariyya⁽⁴⁾ but he cites no examples to substantiate that claim. He would appear to be referring to one or more of the following incidents. One is cited by Shaybānī⁽⁵⁾ and I. Sa'd⁽⁶⁾ who mention a single person being sent as sariyya, Dahya al-Kalbī. A second incident is cited also by Shaybānī who refers to a single person being sent as sariyya during the siege of Medina in 5 A.H. This person was Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān⁽⁷⁾. A third incident is cited by

1. Lisān, al-Qaṣṭallānī, Lane etc.

2. P. 1356.

3. P.1870. Muḥīṭ agrees with Lane in this regard. P.409.

4. P.1356.

5. (بعث رحبة الكلبى سرية وحده) Siyar, I, p.69.

6. (بعث رحبة الكلبى سرية وحده) I. Sa'd, IV, p.251.

7. (بعث ذؤيب بن اليمان فى بعض ايام الخندق سرية وحده) Siyar, I, p.69.

Shaybānī, al-Mas'ūdī and al-Dhahabī who mention that a single person was sent as sariyya. This was 'Abdallāh b. Unays who was sent to kill someone in 5 A.H.⁽¹⁾

These sources provide us with further examples of two persons being sent as sariyya. For example, Ibn Mas'ūd and Khubāb were sent out as sariyya.⁽²⁾ Again, 'Amr b. Umayya and Salma b. Aslam were sent as sariyya to Mecca in order to kill Abū Sufyān.⁽³⁾

These various examples cannot be called exceptions to the general rule that sariyya refers to at least three scouts as Lane suggests. Perhaps Lane could not consult Shaybānī⁽⁴⁾ and Ibn al-'Arabī⁽⁵⁾ who held the opinion that a single scout can be termed sariyya. It would appear more likely that the term sariyya is used for any number of scouts.

Now the question naturally arises that if there is no difference in talī'a and sariyya (when the latter term is used to denote spies as mentioned by Lane) then what is the justification for using these separate terms in the sources?

1. (بعث عبدالله بن انيس سرية وحده) Siyar, I, p.69; Tanbīh (B), p.212; (ان النبي بعثه وحده سرية) al-Dhahabī, Tārīkh al-Islām (Cairo, 1367-9), II, p.299.

2. (بعث ابن مسعود وخبابا سرية) Siyar, I, p.69.

3. (بعث رسول الله عمرو بن أمية ومعاه سلمة) Tanbīh (B), p.213.

4. (ولابن السريته الى مكة الى ابي سفيان) Siyar, I, p.69.
(سرية) (ولابن السريته الى مكة الى ابي سفيان) Siyar, I, p.69.

5. (وحده السرية وحده الى) Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī bi Sharḥ al-Imām Ibn al-'Arabī (Cairo, 1931-4), VII, p.45.
(أربعة مائة)

Al-Sarkhasī⁽¹⁾ and al-Nuwawī⁽²⁾ furnish us with the answer. They say that a sariyya is despatched only by night, works in the darkness but remains hidden during the day. The important feature of this term is that it stresses activity only at night. On the other hand, there is no such condition for the application of the term ṭalī‘a who can be despatched at any time and can perform his duties during the day as well as during the night. As has already been mentioned, ‘Umayr b. Wahb was sent by the Meccans as ṭalī‘a to have an idea of the number of soldiers in the Prophet's camp. The situation implies that ‘Umayr worked during the day, because at night he could not have obtained an estimate of the Prophet's force without meeting somebody, which he apparently did not do.

Here is an example of a ṭalī‘a sent by night by the Prophet and who worked under cover of darkness. It is stated that during the siege of Medina in 5 A.H. the Prophet despatched two separate persons as his ṭalī‘as⁽³⁾ who did not know about each other's mission. While on duty they came across each other and fighting broke out between them as enemies. After the exchange of some blows they realised their misunderstanding and came to the Prophet and reported their misdeed. The Prophet consoled

1. (وإنما سموا سرية لأنهم يسرون بالليل و) Siyar, I, p.68

2. (قالوا سميت سرية لأنها تسرى في الليل و يخفى زهابها) Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim bi Sharḥ al-Nuwawī (Cairo, 1348-9) XII, p.37; see also Kindī, The Apology of el-Kindī (London, 1885), p.77; Nihāya, II, p.173; Muḥīṭ, p.409.

3. (خرجت طليعتان لرسول الله من الخندق) Siyar, I, p.104;

(خرجت بعدد الك طليعتان لرسول الله) Wāqidī, II, p.474.

them sympathetically.⁽¹⁾

There is another difference in the nature of talī'a and sariyya. A talī'a is always sent for spying (although he can become involved in fighting for self defence) but a sariyya has wider meanings than the activity of spying because sometimes it is sent for fighting and sometimes for secret assassinations too.⁽²⁾

There are many examples of a sariyya being sent for fighting⁽³⁾ or secret assassination.⁽⁴⁾ They are, however, beyond the scope of this study and we will restrict our discussion only to the examples of the sariyya sent for spying.

The Nakhla expedition in 2 A.H. under the command of 'Abdallāh b. Jahsh resulted, according to some sources, in the battle of Badr, because a man from the Qurayshite caravan was killed at the hand of one of the Muslims. This expedition is termed sariyya by Wāqidī who says that it was sent with the sole purpose of spying.⁽⁵⁾

1. Siyar, I, p.104.

2. Ibid., I, p.70.

3. Such as when the Prophet sent Ḥamaza along with thirty riders to intercept a Meccan caravan led by Abū Jahl.

(بعثه سرية في ثلاثين راكبا) I. Sa'd, III, p.9; and when the Prophet sent Bashīr b. Sa'd with a force of three hundred men towards Janāb. (بعث رسول الله بشيرين سعد ومعه ثلاثة مائة) I. Sa'd, IV, p.280.

4. Such as when the Prophet sent 'Abdallāh b. Unays to assassinate someone as mentioned earlier. See above p.17.

5. (انما امرهم ان يتحسسوا الاخبار قريش) Wāqidī, I, p.16.

It is stated in some sources that the Prophet sent ten of his companions under the command of 'Āṣim b. Thābit towards Mecca on a spying mission. This mission failed because the spies were noticed and overpowered by the Banū Liḥyān at a place called al-Rajī' in the vicinity of Mecca. The traditions recorded in the sources state that these people were sent as sariyya for spying.⁽¹⁾

Another example of a sariyya sent for spying by the Prophet is already mentioned, Hudhayfa.⁽²⁾ During the siege of Medina he was despatched by night to the enemy camp where he performed his duties under cover of darkness, as will be discussed later, and, then, came back with valuable information about the intentions of the enemy.

To sum up the discussion so far we have to say that sariyya is a term used for various kinds of expeditions, one of which is to gather intelligence and it can be applied to any number of scouts. Moreover, a sariyya is despatched secretly at night and it tries to fulfil a mission under cover of darkness.

1. (بعث رسول الله سرية عينا وأمر عليهم عاصم) Musnad, XV, p.230;

(بعث النبي سرية عينا) Istī'āb, III, p.132;

(بعث النبي سرية عينا) Usūl, VIII, p.255;

(بعث النبي سرية عينا) Irshād, VI, p.312.

See also Wāqidī, I, p.354; Abū Dā'ūd, Sunan, ed. A.M.A. Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1950), III, p.69; Isāba, I, p.418; al-Suyūṭī, al-Khaṣā'is al-Kubrā (Cairo, 1967), I, pp.549-50.

2. See above, p. 16.

Rabī'a

Abū 'Ubayda,⁽¹⁾ Lisān,⁽²⁾ Ibn al-Anbārī⁽³⁾, Nihāya,⁽⁴⁾ Wasīṭ,⁽⁵⁾ Fayrūzabādī⁽⁶⁾ and Lane⁽⁷⁾ agree on the definition of rabī'a: namely that it is applied to a spy who climbs a hill or any high place to observe the activities of the enemy.⁽⁸⁾

There are also verses ascribed to the pre-Islamic or early Islamic poets containing the term rabī'a or rabī' denoting the meanings given above.

'Amr b. Ma'dikarb says,

'we sent our spy (rabī'a) who climbed a higher place (and watched the territory below and then came back) and said that the enemy forces (could be surprised because they) were relaxing.'⁽⁹⁾

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1. Naqā'id, I, p.234.
 2. I, p.82.
 3. Dīwān al-Mufaddalyāt ma'a Sharḥ al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad al-Anbārī, ed. C.J. Lyall (Beirut, 1920-1), p.864.
 4. II, p.58.
 5. I, p.321.
 6. I, p.16.
 7. Pp. 1007-8.
 8. Rabī' and murtabi'ūn are also used in the meanings given above. See Ibn al-Anbārī, op. cit., p.67; Lane, pp.1007-8; Wasīṭ, I, p.321. Al-mirba'a is a place where a rabī'a stations himself. Ibn al-Anbārī, op.cit., p.736; Lisān, I, p.82; Lane, p.1008.
 9. فارسلنا ربيئنا فاوفى فقال الا الا خمس رنوع
Al-Aṣma'ī, al-Aṣma'iyyāt, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir and 'Abd al-Salām Hārūn (Cairo, n.d.), p.200.

Another poet says,

"The commander in the battles kept on spying
(lā yazālu rabi'tan) while mounted on the
slender-saddled back of his horse in a brave
manner." (1)

Rabī'a b. Maqrūm uses the word mirba'a in one of his verses⁽²⁾,
the translation of which is as follows,

"And many the watching place (mirba'a) I have
mounted as the evening drew on, like as the falcon
takes up his place to watch for the prey." (3)

1.

رئيس حروب لا يرال ربيعة
مشيحا على محقوف العلب ملبد

Al-Asma'i, op. cit., p.113.

2. Al-Dabbiyy, al-Mufaddalyāt, ed. C.J. Lyall (Beirut, 1920-1)

p.736. (ومرباة اوفيت جتح اصيله عليها كما اوفى القطامي مرقبا)

3. Al-Dabbiyy, al-Mufaddalyāt. Trans. C.J. Lyall as: The Mufaddalyāt

(Oxford, 1918), p.315. There are, however, other verses

containing the term rabi'a although not as revealing as the
ones mentioned above. For example, Rabī'a b. Maqrūm says,

"As the scout of an army or of a troop of horse
assembled for a foray, what time a weakling
tribesman cannot captain his men." Ibid., p.315.

(ربيئة جيشا و ربيعة مقنن اذا لم يقدر وغل من القوم مقنن)
Al-Dabbiyy, op. cit., p.737) and 'Abd al-Shāriq says,

"We sent Abū 'Amir as a scout, then he said:
Rejoice at (the fortune you may gain from) the
people. (فارسنا اباعمر و ربيئا فقال انعموا بالقوم عينا)

Abū Tammām, Kitāb Ash'ār al-Hamāsa ma'a Sharḥ al-Tabrīzī,

ed. G.G. Freytag (Bonn, 1928), p.219. 'Adī b. Zayd uses

the word rabiyya in one of his verses as follows,

ربيئة لم ثوق و الدحا لحبذا اذا ضاع راقبها

I. Hishām, I, p.48. Al-Suhaylī says that the word rabiyya which

occurs in this verse is a changed form of rabi'a. Al-Rawd al-Unuf,

ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān 'Abd al-Wakīl (Cairo, 1967-70), I, p.324.

Apart from these verses the sources provide some examples of the use of this term in the meanings given at the beginning of this section. One example has already been mentioned⁽¹⁾ and here are a few more.

1. During the Day of Shaqīqa , Bistām b. Qays of the Banū Shaybān was advancing towards the territory of the Banū Dabba. When Bistām, along with his companions, reached a sandhill called al-Ḥasan he climbed it to watch the underlying territory.⁽²⁾ He saw a herd belonging to the Banū Dabba nearby and fell suddenly upon it.⁽³⁾

In this example the word liyarba'a is used which means, according to Lane,⁽⁴⁾

'to take a high and commanding position upon a mountain or to ascend upon it to look.'

The person who acts like this is called rabī'a as raba'a lanā fulān means, according to Lane,⁽⁵⁾

"Such a one was, or became, or acted as, a scout to us."

2. Giving the account of the Day of al-Iyād, Abū 'Ubayda says that the Banū 'Utba, the Banū 'Ubayd and the Banū Zubayd were at war with Bistām. The Banū 'Utba and the Banū 'Ubayd were encamped at Rawḍat al-Thamad, the Banū Zubayd were at Ḥadīqa and

1. See above p.13.

2. صعد ليربا Naqā'id, I, p.234.

3. Ibid., I, pp.233-35.

4. P.1007.

5. P.1007.

Bisṭām's force was at Hidbat al-Khaṣiyy. Bisṭām sent a scout (rabī'a) who climbed a hill and saw a gathering at Ḥadīqa. Then Bisṭām happened to capture a slave who belonged to the Banū 'Ubayd and asked him where his tribe was. The slave told him that his tribe was at Ḥadīqa. On further interrogation the slave revealed the numbers of his tribe's force and the location of the Banū 'Utba. As Bisṭām's rabī'a had noticed a gathering at Ḥadīqa, he believed the statement of the slave and advised his tribe to surprise the enemy.⁽¹⁾

3. There are also examples from the Prophet's time. In the year 8 A.H. the Prophet sent a sariyya headed by Ghālīb b. 'Abd-allāh towards the Banū Mulawwuh. When the party reached Baṭn al-Kadīd, Ghālīb sent Jundub b. al-Mukayth as rabī'a. Jundub said that he set out towards a nearby hill and climbed it so that he could see the territory below.⁽²⁾ Unfortunately an enemy soldier saw him and shot an arrow towards him which badly wounded him. Jundub said that he kept motionless. The enemy soldier again shot him with another arrow which again hit him but he did not move. Jundub went on to say that the enemy thought that if his target had been a rabī'a he ought to have moved⁽³⁾ because of the pain he had given him by his arrows. He (the enemy soldier) then went his way satisfied with the situation.

1. Naqā'id, II, p.581.

2. (فبعثنى أصحابي ربيعة فعمدت الى تل) Tabarī, III, p.27.
 (ارسلوا جنود بن مكث ربيعة لهم قال فقصدت) Kāmil, II, p.174.
 3. (لو كان ربيعة لتحرك) Tabarī, III, p.28; Kāmil, II, p.175.

These examples along with the verses ascribed to the pre-Islamic period quoted in this section seem enough to substantiate the meaning of the term rabī'a given at the beginning of this section, namely that the term rabī'a is applied to a spy who climbs a hill or any high place to observe the activities of the enemy.

Shayyifa

According to Abū 'Ubayda⁽¹⁾ and Lisān⁽²⁾ this term has the same meaning as that of talī'a (scout). It is interesting to note that the present author could find no other example of the use of this term in the above meanings except the one below.

Qays al-Manqariyy was planning to make a raid on the Banū Bakr. Before taking any steps he sent out a scout (shayyifa)⁽³⁾ for spying purposes. During his search for news the scout who was known as al-Ahtam met another man and both agreed to give each other correct information about themselves. When al-Ahtam asked the other man who he was he answered that he was such-and-such a person of the Banū Bakr who were camping at a watering-place nearby. In reply to a similar question al-Ahtam told him that he was Sinān b. Sumayy. Then they both returned to their respective tribes to tell the tale. Now al-Ahtam's name Sinān was little known and he was known by his nickname, al-Ahtam, only. Therefore when the Bakrite went to his tribe and told them that

1. Naqā'id, II, p.1024.

2. VIII, p.237.

3. (فبعث قيسا لاحتتم وحو سنان ابن سمى شيفة
اي طليعة له) Naqā'id, II, p.1024.

he had met a person named Sinān b. Sumayy they could not know whom their fellow tribesman had met. On the other hand, al-Ahtam managed to get information about the location of the enemy's camp and told Qays about it who took the Banū Bakr by surprise and captured a large amount of booty.⁽¹⁾

Sabaqa

Ibn 'Abd Rabbih. defines this term as talī'a meaning a spy. It is interesting to note that no example of the use of this term, in the above meaning, has come to the notice of the present author except the one given by the above mentioned source and it is actually another version of the earlier mentioned story of Qays b. 'Āsim who planned to make a raid on his enemies⁽²⁾ and sent out a spy to get some information. This spy is termed sabaqa by Ibn 'Abd Rabbih. ⁽³⁾

'Ayn

According to Ibn Abi'l-Ḥadīd,⁽⁴⁾ al-Bahrānī,⁽⁵⁾ Nihāya,⁽⁶⁾

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1. Naqā'id, pp.1023-4.
 2. See above, pp.25-6.
 3. 'Iqd, III, pp.332-3.
 4. Op. cit., XV, p.90
 5. Op. cit., IV, p.377.
 6. III, p.163.

(فبعت قيس بن عامر للاهتـم سبقة له
والسبقة الطليعة فانه الخبر)

Fayrūzabādī, ⁽¹⁾ Lisān, ⁽²⁾ Lane, ⁽³⁾ Muhīt, ⁽⁴⁾ Sihāh ⁽⁵⁾ and Wasīt ⁽⁶⁾
‘ayn is a person sent out for spying like ṭalī‘a.

Pre-Islamic poetry supports this definition. Yazīd b. al-Khadhdhāq uses this term in one of his verses, ⁽⁷⁾ a translation of which is as follows,

"If you will send a spy (‘ayn) to search us
 out he will find around my tents the whole
 tribe sitting". ⁽⁸⁾

One example of the use of this term in the above meaning has already been mentioned ⁽⁹⁾ and here are a few more examples from the sources.

1. Imra'l-Qays is the most famous pre-Islamic Arabic poet. His father Ḥajar b. ‘Amr was killed by the Banū Asad and for his honour's sake he set aside his literary activities and resolved to take revenge for the murder of his father. He sought help from the Banū Bakr and the Banū Taghlib against the Banū Asad and managed to collect a considerable force. Then he sent his spies (‘uyūn) ⁽¹⁰⁾ towards the Banū Asad to get secret information about

1. IV, p.253.
2. XIII, pp.301-3.
3. P.1008.
4. P.649.
5. P.466.
6. II, p.647.
7. فان تبعثوا عينا تمنى لقاءنا
 تجد حول ابياتى الجميع جلوسا al-Dabbiyy, op.cit., p.600.
8. Lyall, op. cit., p.237.
9. See above, p.12.
10. (فبعث العيون على بنى اسد) Aghānī, IX, p.90.
 (فبعث العيون الى بنى اسد) Kāmil, I, p.378.

their position and strength.

The Banū Asad while in the territory of the Banū Kināna received a warning from 'Ilbā b. al-Ḥārith that the spies ('uyūn) of Imra'l-Qays had visited their ranks and had managed to get away with information about their secrets to report back to Imra'l-Qays.⁽¹⁾ 'Ilbā, then, advised the Banū Asad to leave the said territory at once without informing the Banū Kināna because he feared an attack from the enemy, and the Banū Asad acted upon this advice. Later on, when Imra'l-Qays advanced to attack he missed his target because the situation had changed since the departure of his spies.⁽²⁾

This story is an example of espionage and counter espionage. It illustrates how Imra'l-Qays tried to plan a successful raid by despatching his spies who came back with useful information but when he set out for a raid and reached the spot he found the situation completely changed because the enemy had taken counter-intelligence steps.

2. Here is another example of the use of the term ('ayn) in the meaning of a spy. It is the account of the Day of al-Falj . It is stated that the Banū Bakr b. Wā'il sent a spy ('ayn) towards the Banū Ka'b who went as far as the well of Falj ⁽³⁾ where he

1. (ان عيون امرئ القيس قد اتتكم ورجعت اليه) Aghānī, IX, p.90;

(ان عيون امرئ القيس قد عادوا اليه بخبركم) Kāmil, I, p.378.

2. Aghānī, IX, pp.90-1;

Kāmil, I, pp.378-9;

Ayyām, p.119.

3. (مان بكر بن وائل بعث عينا على بني كعب بن ربيعة حتى جاء الفلج) Aghānī, V, p.22.

found the enemy herds poorly guarded. He returned to his tribe with this precious information and they hurried to prepare for a raid to capture the herds. When they, the Banū Bakr, came near to the well they heard the voices of a large number of men and the neighing of horses which shattered their dreams. They asked their spy (1) ('ayn] about the situation but he could not give any satisfactory answer. Then they sent another spy to get wind of the new situation who returned with the report that he had seen a large gathering of people and a great many horses which meant that the main body of the tribe had come back. The Banū Bakr hurried back towards their territory at night but the morning revealed their footprints to the Banū Ka'b who pursued them and succeeded in capturing some booty from the intruders. (2)

This term is also frequently used in the accounts of the Prophet's battles with his enemies. Here are some such examples.

1. When the Prophet was preparing a raid upon the caravans of Abū Sufyān before the battle of Badr it is stated that he sent two spies ('aynayn] in advance towards his enemies to bring back any news about his enemy. (3) Some of the sources mention these spies

1. (فقالوا لعينهم ما هذا) Aghānī, V, p.22.

2. Ibid., V, pp.22-23; Ibn al-Athīr records

that during the feuds between Bakr and Taghlib in the Jāhiliyya Kulayb had a spy in the ranks of the enemy who used to listen to their talks with the view to informing Kulayb.

(وكان لклиب عين يسمع ما Kāmil, I, p.386.

3. (و قدم رسول الله عبيد بن لهيعة إلى المشركين يأتباده بخبر عدوه) I. Sa'd, II, p.12.

individually as they record that Basbas was sent out as 'ayn towards the caravan of Abū Sufyān to find out what was going on there.⁽¹⁾

When 'Adī and Basbas returned after a short stay at the well of Badr, Abū Sufyān reached the spot and asked Majdī (a local Bedouin) if he had seen any of the spies ('uyūn) of Muhammad.⁽²⁾

2. When giving the account of the incident which happened at al-Rajī', Wāqidī states, as mentioned earlier,⁽³⁾ that the expedition of al-Rajī' was meant for espionage against the Meccans. He says that the Prophet had sent the 'people of al-Rajī'' towards Mecca as spies ('uyūnan) to get information about the activities of the Quraysh.⁽⁴⁾ The tradition recorded in Musnad regarding

1. (وقدم رسول الله بسببة عنا ينظر ما) Abū Dā'ūd, op. cit., III, p.53; Isāba, p.147, 179.
(مذمت غير أبي سفيان)

2. (هل رأيت أحدا من عيون محمد) Wāqidī, I, p.20;

(هل أحسست أحدا من عيون محمد) I. Sa'd, II, p.13.

Wāqidī mentions that before the battle of Uhud when the Prophet found out the advancing Meccan army he sent two spies named Anas and Mūnis (بعث النبي عيين له) who located the Meccan army. Then they travelled some distance flanking it and came back to the Prophet with their report. I, pp.206-7.

3. See above, p. 20.

4. (بعث أصحاب الرحيق عيوننا إلى مكة) Wāqidī, I, p.345.
(ليخبروه خبر قريش)

this event also states that these people were sent out as spies ('aynan).⁽¹⁾

3. When the Prophet was on his way to attack the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq his companions captured an enemy spy ('aynan).⁽²⁾ They asked him the whereabouts of his tribe but he expressed his ignorance. It was only when 'Umar threatened to kill him that he said that he belonged to the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq and that he had left his leader Ḥārith gathering a force to attack them. He went on to say that he had been sent by his leader in search of news about their activities.⁽³⁾

4. When the Prophet was on his way to Mecca in 6 A.H. (an expedition which resulted in the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya) he sent for Busr b. Sufyān and ordered him to go to Mecca as a spy ('aynan).⁽⁴⁾ He told Busr that the Quraysh had learnt about his journey for the lesser pilgrimage and that Busr should go to Mecca and find out the reaction of its inhabitants towards this journey and to report back to him.⁽⁵⁾ Busr reached Mecca, carefully watched the activities of the Quraysh and came back with his report. He told the Prophet that the Quraysh had resolved not to

1. (بعث رسول الله عشرة رهط عينا) Musnad, XV, pp.57-8, and according to another tradition recorded in Musnad بعث رسول الله سرية عينا XV, p.230; see also Istī'āb, III, p.132; Usūl, VIII, p.255; Isāba, I, p.418; Suyūṭī, op. cit., pp.549-50.
2. (اصاب عينا) Wāqidī, I, p.406; see also Maqrīzī, p.366.
3. Wāqidī, I, p.406; Maqrīzī, p.366.
4. (فارسله عينا) Wāqidī, II, p.573 and according to Istī'āb, I, p.163 بعث بين يديه and according to Kanz, X, p.312 بعث النبي عينا له
5. Wāqidī, II, p.573; Istī'āb, I, p.163; Isāba, I, p.151.

let him enter the city. They had called their allies for help and had pitched their camp outside the city at a place called Baldah. They had sent Khālīd with two hundred horsemen to al-Ghamīm⁽¹⁾ and had placed ten spies ('uyūn)⁽²⁾ on the hill tops starting from Baldah to a hill called Wazar. They, the spies, had adopted a secret language to convey messages to one another.⁽³⁾

These examples are, perhaps, enough to confirm the definition of the term 'ayn given at the beginning of this section, namely that the term 'ayn is used for a person sent out as talī'a for the purpose of spying.

Jāsūs/tajassus/tahassus

According to Lisān,⁽⁴⁾ Ṣihāh,⁽⁵⁾ Fayrūzabādī,⁽⁶⁾ al-Baḥrānī⁽⁷⁾, Lane⁽⁸⁾ and Wasīt⁽⁹⁾, jāsūs is equivalent to talī'a and 'ayn. The activity of a jāsūs is called tajassus, a term used in al-Qur'ān,

1. Name of a place between 'Uṣfān and Ḍajnān. Samhūdī, II, p.354.

Ḍajnān is 25 miles from Mecca, ibid., II, p.378, and

'Uṣfān is two days' journey from Mecca, ibid., II, p.345.

2. (وقد وضعوا الميون على الجبال) Wāqidī, II, p.580.

3. Ibid.; Iṣāba, I, p.149.

4. XIII, p.303.

5. P.466.

6. II, p.214.

7. Op. cit., IV, p.378.

8. P.423.

9. I, p.123.

walā tajassasū⁽¹⁾ (do not ye inquire respecting, or search or inquire or spy into, private circumstances).⁽²⁾

The Qur'ān and other sources use another word tahassus with hā', sometimes instead of tajassus and sometimes along with it. As the

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1. XLIX: 12 (وَلَا تَجَسَّسُوا)
 2. Lane, p.423. There seems to be a general consensus of the commentators of al-Qur'ān, the traditionalists and the other scholars that this statement of al-Qur'ān is intended to forbid the Muslims to spy out the hidden matters of fellow Muslims which they themselves do not like to be made public. They do not include espionage against the enemies of the Muslim state in this prohibition because the Prophet himself was in the habit of sending spies towards his enemies (some examples of which have been quoted earlier and some will be mentioned later on). See Sahnūn, al-Mudawwana (Cairo, 1323 A.H.), III, p.3; Ṭabarī, Taf., XXVI, p.87; Kanz, III, p.462; Ibn Kathīr, Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm (Beirut, 1388 A.H.), IV, p.213; al-Rāzī, Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb (Cairo, 1307-9 A.H.), VII, p.416; al-Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl (Cairo, 1330 A.H.), V, p.89; Jalālayn, II, p.113; Muḥīṭ, p.109; Mishkāṭ, II, p.620; Irshād, V, pp.67-8; al-Māwardī, al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyya (Cairo, 1960), p.43; al-Nuwayrī, Nihāyat al-Arab (Cairo, 1924-55), VI, p.158; Sayyid Quṭub, Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān (Beirut, 1391 A.H.), VII, pp.534-5; al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Mīzān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān (Beirut, 1393 A.H.), XVIII, p.323; G.Sale, The Koran (London, n.d.), p.498; R. Bell, The Qur'ān (Edinburgh, 1937-9), II, p.525.

Qur'ān says "tahassasū"⁽¹⁾ and a tradition is recorded in some sources 'walā tajassasū walā tahassasū'⁽²⁾ do not be inquisitive about one another, or spy on one another)⁽³⁾

Qurtubī mentions various opinions on the differences on the meanings of these words. According to one view, tajassus means to investigate those facts which have been kept secret while tahassus means the act of seeking out and investigating information.⁽⁴⁾ According to another opinion tajassus is used for investigation and tahassus is used for the activity in which one comes to know about some fact without intentional effort.⁽⁵⁾ According to another opinion mentioned by Qurtubī tajassus is used for the activity of that kind of spy who is sent by someone else for the purpose of spying while tahassus is used when one tries to get information for oneself.⁽⁶⁾

According to al-Suhaylī tajassus means to investigate with the help of someone else while tahassus means to indulge in spying personally.⁽⁷⁾

1. XII:87 فتحسسوا من يوسف (O my sons, go and make inquiry after Joseph. G. Sale, op. cit., p.236.
2. Mālik b. Anas, Muwattā, ed. Aḥmad Rātib 'Armūsh (Beirut, 1400 A.H.), p.653; Musnad, XIV, p.246; Muslim, IV, p.178; Mishkāt, II, p.620.
3. Al-Khaṭīb al-Tabrīzī, Mishkāt al-Maṣābīh, trans. James Robson, (Lahore, 1972), III, p.1045.
4. (ان التجسس البحث عما يكتف عنك والتحسس بالحاطب الاخبار و البحث عنها)
Al-Jāmi' li Ahkām al-Qur'ān (Cairo, 1935-50), XVI, p.373.
5. (ان التجسس هو البحث ومنه قيل رجل جاسوس اذا يبحث عن الامور وبها)
Ibid., XVI, p.373.
6. (انه بالحاطب تطلبه لنفسه وبالحجيم ان يكون رسولاً لغيره)
Ibid., XVI, p.373.
7. (التحسس بالحاطب ان تسمع الاخبار بنفسك والتجسس بالحجيم وهو تفحص عنها بغيرك)
op. cit., V, p.116.

According to Zamakhsharī tajassus is used when one tries one's best to obtain news while tahassus is used when one endeavours to find news by simply using one's listening (or seeing) faculty.⁽¹⁾

Ibn Kathīr in his Tafsīr says that tajassus is generally used for a spy who investigates private affairs of an evil nature and tahassus is its opposite.⁽²⁾ Ibn Kathīr also quotes al-Awzā'ī saying that tajassus means to investigate some matter and tahassus means to listen to the conversation of the people stealthily.⁽³⁾

These definitions do not provide us with exact information on the difference between the use of these words but they would have us believe that tajassus is used when one spies for somebody else and tries one's best to unveil the secrets of the enemy by whatever means one can muster, while on the other hand tahassus is used for the activities of a person who spies for himself and gets some information without much labour. It is interesting to note that the historical sources do not seem to stress such differences very much and they use these terms as synonyms on occasion. Here are two such examples.

1. Ten nights before setting out from Medina to intercept the caravan of Abū Sufyān before the battle of Badr, the Prophet sent

1. (جسس هو با الجيم تعرف الخبر بـ لطف وثيقة وهو التجود والمبالغة ومنه الجاسوس وبالحاء تطلب الشئ بحاسة كما التسمع على القوم) op. cit., I, p.195.

2. (التجسس غالبا يطلق في الشر ومنه الجاسوس) op. cit., IV, p.213. أما التحسس فيكون غالبا في الخير
See also Fayrūzabādī, II, p.214; al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī, op. cit., XVIII, p.323.

3. (التجسس البحث عن الشئ، والتحسس الاستماع إلى حديث القوم وهم له كارهون) op. cit., IV, p.213.

two spies, towards the enemy. This event is described by Wāqidī⁽¹⁾ and Tanbīh⁽²⁾ with the word tahassus but Ibn Khayyāt⁽³⁾
(4) and Kāmil describe it with the word tajassus.

2. Later on, when the Prophet was on his way to intercept the said caravan he sent two more spies, 'Adī and Basbas. Wāqidī⁽⁵⁾ and Ibn Hishām⁽⁶⁾ mention their mission using the word tahassus while Ibn Sa'd⁽⁷⁾ employs the word tajassus.

These examples clearly illustrate that there may be some difference in the meanings of these words but as long as they are used in a spying context the sources do not bother about such differences. Perhaps this is the reason that Nihāya quotes an opinion that the two words are synonyms.⁽⁸⁾

Here are some examples of the use of tahassus.

1. The expedition of Nakhla, mentioned earlier in the section dealing with sariyya is said to have been sent in search of news of the Quraysh (an yatahassasū).⁽⁹⁾

1. (يتحسان خبر العير) I, p.19.

2. (يتحسان اخبار العير) (B) p.205.

3. (يتجسان خبر العير) I, p.23.

4. (يتجسان خبر العير) II, p.106.

5. (يتحسان الخبر) I, p.40.

6. (يتحسان له الاخبار) I, p.374.

7. (يتجسان خبر العير) III, p.496.

8. I, p.191.

9. (ان يتحسسوا اخبار قريش) Wāqidī, I, p.16.

2. Before the battle of Badr the Prophet sent 'Alī, Zubayr, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ and Basbas b. 'Amr towards the well of Badr in search of news (yataḥassasūn). They captured some water carriers of the Quraysh and brought them back for interrogation.⁽¹⁾

3. Ḥajjāj b. 'Ulāṭ accepted Islam after the conquest of Khaybar in 6 A.H. The Meccans did not yet know about his conversion. So he went to Mecca to collect his assets. It is stated that when he reached the suburbs of Mecca he saw some Qurayshites searching for news (yataḥassasūn) about Muḥammad. When the Qurayshites saw Ḥajjāj they came to him and asked about the activities of Muḥammad.⁽²⁾

Here are some examples of the use of tajassus and jāsūs from the sources.

1. Abū Sufyān was leading the caravan of the Quraysh before the battle of Badr. When he was on his way home he anticipated the danger of interception so he kept on making enquiries about the situation (yatajassasu al-akhbār) from the riders whom he met on his way.⁽³⁾

1. (يتحسسون على الماء) Wāqidī, I, p.51.

2. (فهم يتحسسون الاخبار فلما رأوئى قالوا) Tabarī, III, p.18;
عنده والله خبر اخبرنا به امر محمد
Tabarī also gives an account concerning al-'Abbās who came out of the Prophet's camp at Marr al-Zahrān, when the latter was on his way to Mecca in 8 A.H. and said that he heard the voices of Abū Sufyān, Ḥakīm and Budayl who were on a spying mission (وقد خرجوا يتحسسون الخبر) III, p.52.

3. (كان ابو سفيان حين دنا من الحجاز يتجسس) I. Hishām, I, p.369;
الاخبار ويسأل من لقي من الركبان

Ibn al-Athīr records an example of the use of tajassus from the pre-Islamic time. He states that 'Abdallāh b. Ubayy did

2. The Prophet sent his secret agents to Mecca in order to kill Abū Sufyān but they could not fulfil their mission due to certain reasons. When one of them was on his way back to Medina he saw two scouts sent by the Quraysh to search for news about the activities of the Prophet (yatajassasān amr Rasūl Allāh).⁽¹⁾

3. During the siege of Medina in 5 A.H. the Prophet sent Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān one night towards the enemy camp in search of news. It is stated that because of the darkness Ḥudhayfa managed to attend a meeting of notables called by Abū Sufyān. Before starting his speech Abū Sufyān advised the participants to be careful about the presence of enemy spies (jawāsīs wa'l-‘uyūn) and that everyone should check the man sitting next to him (in order to prevent the leakage of the proceedings of the meeting).⁽²⁾

These examples of the use of the terms jāsūs, tajassus and tahassus confirm their meanings given in the beginning of this section; namely that the term jāsūs was probably used in

not take part in the battle of Bu‘āth, which was fought about five years before the hijra of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina between the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj of Medina.

‘Abdallāh was, however, anxious to know what was happening on the battlefield. He was seen in the vicinity of the battlefield by some soldiers, carrying the dead body of their

leader to Medina, searching for news (فبينما عبد الله بن أبي ركباً قريباً من معاذ يتجسس الأخبار)
Kāmil, I, p.511.

1. (يتجسسان امر رسول الله) Kāmil, II, p.131.
2. (احذروا الجواسيس والعيون) Wāqidī, II, p.489.

'a spy who gives notice, to a people, of an enemy to put them on their guard; and in the like manner nadhīra is a spy who informs an army of the state of the enemy' (1)

The pre-Islamic poet, al-Marrār b. Munqidh, uses nudhur (plural form of nadhīra) in one of his verses, (2) a translation of which is as follows.

"Many the man, mighty in his kingdom, who has threatened me, and warning from him has reached me before I came to him" (3)

A tradition of the Prophet is recorded in Muslim (4), the translation of which is as follows,

"O people, I have seen an army with my eyes and I am a plain warner that you should immediately manage to find an escape." (5)

Here are some examples of the use of these terms with this meaning from other sources.

1. Ḥārith b. Zālim was in a state of war with the Banū 'Āmir and went to seek help from Ḥājib b. Zurāra of the Banū Tamīm. The Banū 'Āmir came to know of his journey through a woman captured by a man of the Banū Ghani. When this Ghanawī went to

1. Lane, p.2782.

2. وعظيم الملك قد اوعده في التنزيه al-Dabbiyy, op.cit., p.152.

3. Lyall, op. cit., p.51; another pre-Islamic poet uses the word nadhīra in one of his verses which is as follows

اتاني من الازد التنزيه بعد ما al-Dabbiyy, op. cit., p.152.

4. تنشد قولي يا العراق مجالعي Muslim, IV, p.59.

5. Muslim, al-Jāmi' al-Sahīh. Trans. A.H. Siddīqī as: اني انا التنزيه العربيان فالنجا

Sahīh Muslim (Lahore, 1976), IV, p.1234.

sleep, the woman managed to escape at midnight. In the morning, the Ghanawī discovered the flight of the woman and went to Ahwas b. Jāfar (leader of the Banū 'Āmir) and informed him that the woman was a warner⁽¹⁾ (mundhira) for her tribe, sent to spy on him. 'Āmir b. Mālik pursued the woman and found her sitting with Hājib b. Zurāra who was asking her about the people who had captured her. 'Āmir heard her saying that her captors were the Banū 'Āmir and such-and-such people were among them.⁽²⁾

2. Abū 'Ubayda says that once Bistām b. Qays attacked a section of the Banū Ḍabba and plundered their camels. He did not go very far when a warner (nadhīr)⁽³⁾ reached the main body of the Banū Ḍabba and told them what had happened. The Banū Ḍabba pursued Bistām, overtook him and killed him.

3. Giving the account of the Day of Kilāb al-Thānī, Abū 'Ubayda says that Yazīd b. 'Abd Maydān was on his way to make a raid on his enemies. When he halted at a place called Tayman he was noticed by an enemy tribesman named Mushammit b. Zinbāgh who was pasturing his camels along with another person. Mushammit advised the other fellow to look after the camels and went to his tribe with the view to warning them⁽⁴⁾ of the advancing enemy. On receiving the warning, his tribe prepared to

1. (قال هي منذرة عليك) Aghānī, XI, p.99.

2. Ibid., XI, p.99;

Ayyām, p.344.

3. (فاتى الذير بنى ضبة) Naqā'id, I, p.190.

4. (حتى اتى الحى فاذرهم) Ibid, I, p.150.

repel the attack.⁽¹⁾

4. There is also an example from the Prophet's time.

It has been mentioned earlier that the Quraysh had resolved not to let the Prophet enter Mecca in 6 A.H.⁽²⁾ and had sent Khālīd to al-Ghamīm with two hundred horsemen. Al-Bukhārī states that when the Prophet managed to avoid this force and marched forward by another route Khālīd hurried towards Mecca to act as a warner to the Quraysh (nadhīran li Quraysh).⁽³⁾

These examples of the use of the terms nadhīr and mundhir confirm their meaning given at the beginning of this section; namely that these signify a spy who gives notice, to a people, of an enemy to put them on their guard.

So far we have discussed the terms ṭalī'a, sariyya, rabī'a, shayyifa, sabaqa, 'ayn, jāsūs, nadhīr and mundhir which are used in the sources for spies. There are, however, other terms which are to be found in the Arabic dictionaries.⁽⁴⁾ As such terms are seldom used in the medieval Arabic sources they have no

1. Naqā'id, I, pp.149-50.

2. See above, p.10-11.

3. (فانطلق بركض نذير القريش) Irshād, IV, p.443. Al-Qaṣṭallānī commenting on this sentence says منذر ابمجي رسول الله (as a warner of the Prophet's advance) Irshād, IV, p.443.

4. Such as baghiyya (بغية) Lisān, VIII, p.237, raqīb (راقب) Elias, al-Qāmūs al-'Asrī (n.d., Cairo), pp.641, 687; rā'id (رائد) naqīda (نقبضة) dasīs (دسيير) G.P. Badger, English-Arabic Lexicon (London, 1881), pp.929, 1012.

practical importance for the purpose of this study and we have, therefore, left them untouched.

The terms discussed so far can be placed in four categories.

In the first category can be place ṭalī'a, 'ayn, jāsūs, sabaqa and shayyifa. These terms may technically have different shades of meaning but the sources use them in the simple meaning of a spy who is sent out to gather intelligence. Ibn Sa'd even uses the first three of these terms for the spies of the same mission. This strongly suggests that there is practically no difference between these terms.

The second category contains only the term rabī'a. The feature which distinguishes it from other spies is that a rabī'a spies against the enemy from an elevated spot or a mountain and keeps a watch on the territory below him.

The third category consists of sariyya which is used in the sources for those spies who were despatched at night and whose mission was to collect secret information about the enemy while working under cover of darkness.

The fourth category consists of nadhīr and mundhīr which is perhaps used especially for those spies who patrolled the outskirts of their tribal territory. Their function was perhaps to bring any suspicious activity of the enemy to the notice of their leaders so that adequate preparation could be made beforehand to meet the threat.

Apart from such differences, some qualities must have been common to all the spies. Because they were entrusted with great responsibilities, and they were, in practical terms, the eyes of the tribe with which they looked into the territory and the

ranks of the enemy and planned accordingly, spies needed to be courageous, with eyesight as sharp as that of a hawk. As Rabi'a b. Maqrūm said:

"And many the watching place I have mounted
as the evening drew on, like as the falcon
takes up his place to watch for the prey."⁽¹⁾

1. See above, p.22.

CHAPTER II

ESPIONAGE IN THE PRE-ISLAMIC PERIOD

Al-Qalqashandī in his extensive work Subh al-A'shā writes that the first person who sent out spies against an enemy was Alexander.⁽¹⁾ Before making this statement he surely did not consult the Bible which records two incidents of sending spies against the enemy in much earlier times.⁽²⁾ But as the history

1. Subh al-A'shā (1920, العدد الأسكندر) (1920, reprinted Cairo, 1383/1963), I, p.429.

2. The first incident concerns Moses, when God ordered him,

"Send thou men, that they may search the Land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel; of every tribe of their fathers shall ye send a man, every one a ruler among them. And Moses by the commandment of the Lord sent them from the wilderness of Paran: all those men were heads of the children of Israel."

(Numbers 13:2, 3)

"And Moses sent them to spy out the Land of Canaan and said unto them, Get you up this way southward, and go up into the mountain: And see the land, what it is; and the people that dwelleth therein, whether they be strong or weak, few or many."

(Numbers 13: 17 & 18).

"So they went up and searched the land from the wilderness of Zin unto Rehab, as men come to Hamath."

(Numbers 13:21)

"And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. And then they went and came to Moses and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh and brought back word unto

of intelligence, in general, is not the topic of this study it

them, and unto all the congregation
and shewed them the fruit of the land."
(Numbers 13:25-26).

The second incident is connected with Joshua. It is
stated that,

"Joshua the son of Nun sent out of
Shittin two men to spy secretly, saying,
Go view the land, even Jericho. And they
went, and came into an harlot's house,
named Rahab, and lodged there."
(Joshua 2:1)

Then after describing that how the king of Jericho came
to know their presence in that house and searched for
them and how the harlot hid them on the roof of her
house and then managed to send them out of the town,
it is stated

"So the two men returned, and descended from
the mountain, and passed over, and came to
Joshua the son of Nun, and told him all the
things that befell them: And they said
unto Joshua, Truly the Lord hath delivered
into our hands all the land; for even all the
inhabitants of the country do faint because
of us." (Joshua 2:23-24).

would be unwise to consume all one's energies in search of the records of espionage of all the nations of all the world. On the other hand, because this study is about the intelligence gathering activities of the Prophet of Islam who started and ended his career in Arabia⁽¹⁾ it is appropriate to give a brief account of what is known of the spying activities of the pre-Islamic Arabs to show that the Prophet, when engaged in espionage, was working according to the Arab traditions and was not an inventor or introducer of this aspect of warfare in Arabia.

The Arabs of pre-Islamic times were either Bedouin or settled people, as Lammens writes, who were once Bedouin.⁽²⁾ The Bedouin constituted the great majority of the population and their main economic basis was the breeding and pasturing of camels and other animals.⁽³⁾ The settlers were either traders

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1. The Arabian peninsula, says O'Leary,

"Has the Hijāz and Yemen along the Red Sea Coast, minor settlements and Omān along the opposite coast; in the land between there is in the north the great Nefūd, Jebel Shammar, and Nejd, in the south the great desert with Yemen, Hadramant, Zofar and Omān along its southern edge."

Arabia Before Muḥammad (London, 1927), p.10.

2. H. Lammens, Islam: Beliefs and Institutions, trans. E. Denison Ross (London, 1929), p.5.
3. Watt, Society, p.26.

or farmers.⁽¹⁾ Living conditions in the Arabian peninsula were generally unfavourable, water was scarce, the weather was too hot and the Arabs were, therefore, in a constant state of struggle for survival and were 'always on the look out for loot'.⁽²⁾ This looting or plundering each other's property was called raiding (ghazw) and was, according to the Encyclopaedia of Islam, 'one of the oldest institutions of the Arabs',⁽³⁾ according to Watt 'a feature of desert life',⁽⁴⁾ according to Lewis 'a natural and legitimate occupation',⁽⁵⁾ and in the words of Hitti 'a national sport'.⁽⁶⁾

According to the rules of the game, says Hitti, no blood should be shed except in cases of extreme necessity.⁽⁷⁾ To achieve the objective, booty, without bloodshed, the raids had to be carried out after careful planning and intelligent choice of time and place and in complete secrecy in order to ensure surprise.⁽⁸⁾ Such arrangements could only be made if tribal spies would go out to ascertain the position and numbers of the enemy, the booty that might be expected, and whether the fighting men of the tribe were with the rest of the people or away on

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1. Ṣāleḥ A. al-'Alī, "Muslim Estates in Ḥidjāz in the First Century A.H.", JESHO (1959), pp.247-8, 253.
 2. L.B. Jones, The People of the Mosque (London, 1932), p.6.
 3. II, p.1055.
 4. Watt, Society, p.26.
 5. B. Lewis, The Arabs in History (London, 1970), p.44.
 6. P.K. Hitti, History of the Arabs (London, 1970), p.25.
 7. Ibid., p.25.
 8. Gindī, p.48.

other business.⁽¹⁾ This implies that espionage was an essential factor in the success of a raid.

In such circumstances one could not expect the enemy to sit idle, waiting for the raiders to come and carry away their property. People knew that they would be subject to surprise attacks if they could not foresee forthcoming dangers. For this purpose it was necessary for them, too, to try to get wind of the plans of the would-be aggressors beforehand so that they could change the place of their camp (if weaker than the aggressor) or could prepare to fight back (if equal or stronger than the aggressor). To have such timely warning of forthcoming attacks they must have their own spies in the ranks of the enemy (if possible) or their scouts must reconnoitre constantly on the outskirts of their tribal territory. All this implies that espionage was a basic need of the tribes in their defence of their properties.

Espionage was also a basic need for the settlers who were either traders or farmers. The Meccans were merchants and had established a vital monopoly of the West Arabian caravan trade.⁽²⁾ They had business relations with the nations beyond the frontiers of Arabia and used to travel long distances in caravans in connection with their business. They had made an arrangement called īlāf (referred to in al-Qur'ān)⁽³⁾ with the tribes on

1. Gindī, p.48.

2. Watt, Society, p.6.

3. CVI:1 لا يلف قريش

their caravan routes which allowed them to pass safely through their territories.⁽¹⁾ But this arrangement did not remove from

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1. It is stated that Hāshim met the leaders of the Arab tribes on the route to Syria (from Mecca) and obtained an īlāf. The īlāf was that the Meccan caravans were to be secure among them in their (Arab tribes) tribal territories without a treaty (والإبلغان يامثوا عندهم في أرضهم), it being only a guaranty of security for the people (أمناً هو) or for the road (أمناً هو أمان الطريق) on condition that the Quraysh transport for them merchandise, saving them its transportation, and return to them their principal and their profit. When Hāshim died, al-Muṭṭalib b. 'Abd Manāf obtained īlāf from the Arab tribes on the caravan route to Yemen. After al-Muṭṭalib's death 'Abd Shams b. 'Abd Manāf obtained īlāf from the tribes on the route to Abyssinia and after his death Nawfal b. 'Abd Manāf obtained īlāf from the tribes on the route to 'Irāq. Al-Qālī, Dhayl al-Amālī wa'l-Nawādir (Būlāq, 1324 A.H.), pp.204-5; Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Munammaq (Hyderabad Deccan, 1384 A.H.), pp.32-36; al-Kalā'ī, Kitāb al-Iktifā', ed. H. Masse (Alger, 1931) pp.208-9; Isaiah Goldfeld, while discussing the three groups of the Arab tribes in respect of their attitude towards the Ka'ba of Mecca and towards the inviolable months, writes that one of these groups was called Muhrimūn or the people respecting the Haram (the sacred territory encircling Mecca) and the inviolable months. There were, however, among these tribes groups and individuals who were still liable to commit hostile actions during the

the Meccans the fear of being plundered by thieves called al-Sa'ālīk who did not care for such treaties and lived by raiding and plundering.⁽¹⁾ This element was a constant source

inviolable months. They were the Muhillūn against whom some tribes organized combat forces or Dhāda Muhrimūn.

"The Tribal Policy of the Prophet Muhammad", unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1970), p.59. About the group called Dhāda Muhrimūn Goldfeld writes,

"They seem to have been a tribal force protecting the interests of all those who respected the inviolable months. Hence they were acting in the interest of the Quraysh." Ibid., p.44.

1. Yūsuf Khalīf, al-Shu'arā al-Sa'ālīk (Cairo, n.d.), p.132; Gindī, p.5;
Sa'ālīk (singular Su'lūk) means poor men. Al-Dabbiyy, op. cit., pp.204, 342; 'Umar Farrūkh, Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī (Beirut, 1978), I, p.212; Lisān, X, p.455. Gindī says that they were brigands and outlaws and though extremely poor, were proudly disdainful of dependence upon others. They lived by raiding and plundering and were famous for their physical strength and swift running, for their courage and fearlessness in face of danger and for their indifference to death (p.5). See also Nihāya, II, p.54. This was the class referred to by 'Utba b. Rabī'a when he advised the Quraysh to leave Muhammad alone before the start of the battle of Badr. Wāqidī states that 'Utba said that if Muhammad was a liar the Arab brigands, Sa'ālīk, would finish him off. If he was a king, they, the Quraysh, would share



of danger for the caravans and could only be neutralised with

his fortune and if he was a Prophet they would be the
most fortunate among all the people (ان يك محمد كاذبا
يكفيكموه ذوبان العرب - معاليك العرب - وان يك ملكا اكلتم في الناس
(ملك ابن اخيكم وان يك نبيا كنتم اسعد الناس). Wāqidī, I, p.63.

Because of their fearlessness in face of dangers they
sometimes worked as mercenaries, as Imra'l-Qays is said to
have employed a number of them in his service in order to
take revenge for his father's killing. Yūsuf Khalīf, op. cit., p.25.

Many famous (or notorious) Arabs belonged to this class
such as 'Urwa b. al-Ward (a poet), (كان معلو كا ينير)
Wāqidī, I, p.376. 'Urwa not only was himself a Su'lūk but
also a patron of his comrades. Yūsuf Khalīf, op. cit.,
p.22; Farrūkh, op. cit., I, p.212. And Fuḍāla b. Sharīk
was a poet, an assassin and a brigand (كان شاعر افاتكا معلوك)
according to Aghānī, XII, p.71. A famous Qurayshite named
'Abdallāh b. Jad'ān was also a brigand (Su'lūk) and an
assassin (كان مبدأ امره معلو كاشير افاتكا). Al-Jāhiz,
al-Bayān wa'l Tabyīn ed. Ḥasan al-Sandūbī (Cairo, 1351 A.H.)
I, p.31 f.n. See also Suhaylī, op. cit., II, p.78.
Ḥammād al-Rāwīya is also said to have been a companion of
brigands (Sa'ālīk) and thieves (يصحب الصعاليك واللعوص)
Aghānī, VI, p.87.
For more information on this class of brigands see Yūsuf
Khalīf, op. cit., pp.21-61.

the help of spies employed by the management of the caravan⁽¹⁾ who would reconnoitre the land over which the caravan would pass and bring any suspicious activity to the notice of the leader of the caravan. Warned beforehand the leader could change the route or take any other appropriate step to avoid the danger of being plundered.

The inhabitants of Yathrib, al-Tā'if and Khaybar were generally farmers and were not without enemies. As their livelihood mainly depended on the produce of their lands it was necessary for them to keep their enemies away from their crops. For this purpose they had to keep a watch on the activities of their enemies and this object could only be achieved with the help of espionage.

It has become obvious from the discussion so far that almost all the Arabs of the pre-Islamic era were dependent upon espionage in their everyday life. It was this institution which defended their animal flocks, ensured the safety of their caravans, protected the produce of their farms and guaranteed the success of their raids. Now it is time to search for the ways and means adopted by them to gather intelligence and to present some examples of the activities of their spies.

The following categories are useful to impose order on the wealth of anecdotes in the sources but inevitably there is some overlap between certain types of spies.

1. O'Leary, op. cit., p.185.

Regular Spies

The most commonly adopted way of gathering intelligence in pre-Islamic Arabia was to despatch spies towards the enemy whenever needed. Some examples of such despatches have been given earlier⁽¹⁾ in the first chapter of this thesis. Here are some more examples of the gathering of intelligence through this sort of spy.

(1) The pre-Islamic poet, 'Abd al-Shāriq b. 'Abd al-'Uzza describes in one of his poems how they sent a spy against the enemy and how he returned successful after fulfilling his mission. He says,

"We sent Abū 'Āmir as a scout; then he
said: Rejoice at (the fortune you may
gain from) the people.

They (the enemy) secretly sent a warrior
from them to spy on us (we recognised him
but) we did not betray their warrior (when
we recognised him close) to us.

They came like a cloud across the horizon,
with a heavy shower of hail, and we
advanced like a raging torrent."⁽²⁾

Abū 'Ubayda says that the Banū Sulayṭ were expecting a raid from their enemies and therefore they sent out a scout to have an early warning of the advancing force. Unfortunately

1. See above, pp.12-4, 24-6.

2. Abū Tammām, Hamāsa, ed. G.G. Freytag (Bonn, 1828), p.219

(فارسلنا اباعمر و ربياء فقال انعموا بالقوم عينا
ودسونارسهم منهم عشاء فلم نخدر بفارسهم لدينا
فجاؤ وعارضا بردا وجيئا كمثل السيل ذركب وازعينا)

the scout fell asleep and the enemy bypassed him and took the Banū Sulayṭ by surprise and plundered their animals.⁽¹⁾

3. Aghānī states that the Banū Khuḏā'a captured some of the camels belonging to the Banū Ka'b of the Banū Kalb. The latter tribe planned to attack the Banū Khuḏā'a to balance the accounts. When they set out to make a raid and came near to the territory of the enemy, they halted and sent 'Amr b. Sufyān as a spy to the enemy. 'Amr met some of the Banū Khuḏā'a in the guise of a tribesman of the Banū Hilāl and told them that he had come in advance of his tribe who was coming to seek their protection. The Banū Khuḏā'a granted him protection and entertained him. During the conversation he obtained detailed information about the position and the strength of the Banū

1. Naqā'id, I, p.30. Abū 'Ubayda records two more examples of this sort which are as follows:

(i) Once Qays b. Zuhayr sent his slave towards the enemy and advised him to pretend to be pasturing his camels.

If the enemy questioned him about his activities then he should narrate the story of the killing of a certain Mālik and listen carefully to what they would say about it. The slave went out, acted as directed and then came back to report their conversation to his master. Naqā'id, I, p.92.

(ii) During the Day of al-Quwayra, 'Imrān b. Murra gathered the Banū Shaybān and advanced towards the territory of the Banū Numayr b. 'Āmir. When he reached quite near to the enemy territory he despatched a spy to obtain information about the state of the enemy. The spy went out and came back

Khuzā'a and then returned to join his tribe. On the basis of this information the Banū Ka'b attacked the Banū Khuzā'a and inflicted a heavy defeat upon them.⁽¹⁾

4. Several sources⁽²⁾ have recorded another incident concerning espionage through one such regular spy. It is stated that Jadhīma al-Abrash, a prince living in a castle named Baqqa on the bank of the Euphrates, was killed treacherously by Dabba, a neighbouring queen. Now Qasīr b. Sa'd being a friend of the slain prince encouraged his successor and nephew, 'Amr b. 'Adī, to take revenge. 'Amr sent him to the queen after cutting off his nose to pretend that he had been mutilated by 'Amr and had come to her to seek protection. When Qasīr met the queen she believed his story and took him into her confidence. She gave him some money to trade on her behalf. Qasīr hastened to the palace of 'Amr, met the prince who sent him back to the queen laden with riches. It increased the queen's confidence in him. So he said to her one day, "It is necessary for every king and queen to provide themselves with a secret passage wherein to take refuge in case of danger". Dabba told him that she had

with the report that the Banū Shaybān were scattered in search of forage. For 'Imrān it was the best opportunity to make a raid, which he did and plundered their animals and captured their women. Naqā'id, I, p.405.

1. Aghānī, X, p.14.

2. Kāmil, I, pp.245-51; Al-Maydānī, Majma' al-Amthāl, ed.

M.M.A. Hamīd ([Cairo?], 1955), I, pp.233-7; R.A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge, 1953), pp.35-7.

already done so and showed him the secret tunnel constructed for this purpose.

After some time Qaṣīr again went out for trade and on his return journey brought one thousand camels laden with merchandise. The sight of the caravan made the queen extremely happy but her happiness was short-lived because Qaṣīr, with the help of 'Amr, had brought two thousand soldiers concealed in sacks on the backs of the camels. When the caravan entered the castle these concealed men suddenly came out of the sacks and attacked the queen's forces. Dabba tried to escape through the tunnel but Qaṣīr, who knew that passage, barred her way. When she saw no alternative she took her life by sucking her seal ring containing poison.

Prisoners

The second source of gathering intelligence about the enemy was prisoners. Some examples of the use of this source have been mentioned earlier.⁽¹⁾ Here are some more examples of this sort.

1. During the battle of Bashr, 'Umayr and Shu'ayb were at war with each other. Once a companion of 'Umayr informed him of the presence of spies from Shu'ayb in his ranks. 'Umayr took immediate steps and captured all the spies sent by his enemy and killed all of them except Qatab b. 'Ubayd. Then he inquired of Qatab about the activities of Shu'ayb. Qatab told him that Shu'ayb was coming to attack him with his force while

1. See above, pp.24, 40-1.

Tha'laba b. Niyāṭ had forsaken him.⁽¹⁾

2. Al-Ḥawfazān attacked a section of the Banū Sa'd b. Zayd Manāt and plundered their herds, taking many of them prisoner. When the news of this mishap reached the main section of the tribe, the Banū Sa'd, Qays b. 'Āsim went out to pursue the plunderers. Al-Ḥawfazān was away from the main force as a spy to get early warning of a possible pursuit when he met Qays (both did not know each other). Qays asked al-Ḥawfazān who he was. Al-Ḥawfazān revealed his identity but in reply to a similar question from him Qays told him that he was Abū 'Alī. Al-Ḥawfazān then returned to his companions and told them that he had met such-and-such a person named Abū 'Alī. A woman who was among the prisoners told al-Ḥawfazān that the man whom he had met was actually Qays b. 'Āsim. This information from a prisoner proved to be very useful because al-Ḥawfazān saved the booty he had achieved by a quick march in order to escape from the pursuers.⁽²⁾

These examples clearly illustrate that prisoners belonging to the enemy tribes were a useful source of information in pre-Islamic Arabia but sometimes the tables were turned because such prisoners managed to convey the secrets of their captors back to their own tribes. One such example is the activities of a woman of the Banū Tamīm mentioned earlier who managed to escape from her captors at midnight and informed her tribal leader,

1. Aghānī, XII, pp.207-8.

2. 'Iqd, III, pp.339-40.

Hājib b. Zurāra, about the forthcoming danger.⁽¹⁾

Here is another interesting example of this sort. It is stated that Nāshib b. Bashāma of the Banū 'Anbar was a prisoner of the Banū Qays b. Tha'laba and lived among them as a prisoner. He came to know that his captors were planning to make a raid on his tribe with the help of some other tribes. He became restless and wanted to warn his tribe of that raid. He requested his captors to be allowed to send a message to his relatives concerning his domestic problems. The Banū Qays agreed to his request but with the condition that the message would be delivered to the messenger in their presence. The captors then brought a slave to perform the duties of a messenger.

Nāshib made a complaint that they had brought a foolish man who was unfit for the job. The slave swore by God that he was not a fool. Nāshib then expressed his suspicion that the slave was a madman but the slave again swore by God and assured him that he was a sensible man. To test his good sense Nāshib asked him whether the stars exceeded the fires in number. The slave answered that although both were numerous the stars were more numerous. Then Nāshib took a handful of sand and asked him how many particles of sand were in his hand. The slave answered that he did not know the exact number but they were in abundance. Then Nāshib pointed towards the sun and asked him what it was. The slave answered that it was the sun. After this session of questions and answers Nāshib expressed his satisfaction and told his captors that he was a wise man and

1. See above, pp.40-1.

fit for the job and gave him a message to be delivered to his relatives which was as follows:

"My relatives should let my red camel wander and should ride my she-camel of dirty white colour. They should take care of my needs among the Banū Mālik. They should know that the box-thorns had put forth their leaves. They should obey Hudhayl b. al-Akhnas because he is a resolute person instead of Hamām b. Bashāma who was unlucky and they should ask Hārith about myself."

The slave went to the Banū 'Anbar to deliver the message and reached his destination. When he gave the message no-one could understand it. Then they sent for Hārith who listened to the message once again and the conversation between him and Nāshib. He then advised the slave to go back and tell Nāshib that they would do as he wished.

After the departure of the slave, Hārith told the Banū 'Anbar that Nāshib had warned them about an immediate danger of a raid, which was as obvious as the sun by a force of soldiers which were as numerous as the particles of sand. He had advised them to leave the mountain (red camel) on which they were stationed and take refuge in the desert (dirty white coloured she-camel). He had also advised them to inform their allies, the Banū Mālik, about the raid which was very near because the enemy had taken up arms (the boxthorns had put forth their leaves) and was ready to attack.

The Banū 'Anbar acted upon this advice and saved themselves while the Banū Mālik did not care and met their fate.⁽¹⁾

1. 'Iqd, III, pp.330-1; Kāmil, I, pp.471-2; Ayyām, pp.170-72; Jawwād 'Alī, Al-Mufasssal fī Tārīkh al-'Arab (Beirut, 1970), V, p.437.

Relatives

People who belonged to a certain tribe but happened to have some kind of relationship with the enemy tribe served, sometimes, as a vehicle of intelligence. One such example is the activities of Ḥārith b. 'Āmr, described in the story of Zuhayr b. Jadhīma,⁽¹⁾ who was the brother of Tumādir, the wife of Zuhayr, and was sent to spy on Zuhayr by Khālīd b. Ja'far.

Here are more examples of espionage through relatives. During the hostilities between the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj it is stated that once Uḥayḥa b. Julāḥ, a leader of the Banū Aws, planned a raid on his enemies.. His wife, Salma, belonged to the Banū al-Najjār of the Banū Khazraj and did not like her relatives to be attacked. The night before the planned raid she bound a string round her son and made him cry almost all the night so that her husband could not sleep. When most of the night had passed, she undid the string and the child went to sleep. Uḥayḥa, too, fell asleep of utter exhaustion. Salma, then, stealthily went out and warned her people of the forthcoming attack. When Uḥayḥa attacked his enemies he found them ready to fight and could not succeed in carrying out his plan. Later on, he found out that his wife had spied on him. Therefore he beat her harshly, broke her arm and then divorced her (later on this lady was married to Hāshim and became the great-grandmother of the Prophet).⁽²⁾

1. See above, pp. 12-3.

2. Kāmil, I, p.496; Ayyām, pp.70-71; Gindī, pp.50-1.

A sister of Zuhayr b. Janāb of the Banū Kalb was married to a tribesman of the Banū Qayn. Once she sent a messenger to her brother with two parcels, one of sand and the other of spikes. When Zuhayr received these parcels he told his people that his sister was warning them about a forthcoming attack of a mighty army (spikes) consisting of countless soldiers (particles of sand) on them. He advised his people to leave their camp to save themselves from destruction. Julāḥ b. 'Awf did not agree with him and said that they should not desert their camp on the advice of a woman. The story goes on to say that Zuhayr left the place and saved himself while Julāḥ remained rooted to the spot and suffered heavy losses at the hand of the invading force of the Banū Qayn.⁽¹⁾

'Umayra b. Ṭāriq of the Banū Yarbū' of the Banū Tamīm was married to a woman of the Banū 'Ijl. Once he went to visit his wife in the quarters of the Banū 'Ijl where he found out that they were planning to make a raid on his tribe. He left their quarters and hurriedly reached his tribe and warned them about the forthcoming raid. Regarding this event 'Umayra says:

"O Ibn Asmā', do not command me to do
what prevents the warrior of great taste
speaking.

That you are raiding my people and I sit
among you and make my knowledge as unknown
hidden thoughts." (2)

1. Kāmil, I, p.370.

2. Naqā'id, II, pp.781-85; Iqd, III, pp.334-5; Kāmil, I,
pp.477-8; Ayyām, pp.184-90.

(فلا تأمرني يا ابن اسماء بالتى تجر الفتى ذالطمع ان يتكلما
بان تنثرو قومي واجلس فيكم واجعل علمي ظن غيب مر جما)

Women

Women were a tool of the espionage apparatus of the pre-Islamic Arabs. A woman sent out by Zuhayr b. Jadhīma to find out the murderer of his son has been mentioned earlier.⁽¹⁾

Another woman who was captured by a man of the Banū Ghanī in the course of his spying activities has also been mentioned⁽²⁾. Here is another example of a woman working as a spy.

Mu'āwiya b. al-Shurayd al-Sulamī went out to fight Hāshim b. Harmala of the Banū Murra with a large force. While he was on his way he gave up the idea of fighting and dispersed his force. Then he came to a well accompanied by only nineteen soldiers where he happened to meet a woman. When he asked her identity, she told him that she belonged to the Banū Juhayna and then managed to escape. She reached Hāshim and informed him about the presence of Mu'āwiya at the well with just nineteen soldiers. Hāshim at first did not believe her but when she described the appearances of the people she had seen he believed her account. Finding his enemy practically alone Hāshim attacked and killed him.⁽³⁾

Travellers

Travellers were a useful source of information for the pre-Islamic Arabs about the territory through which they had

1. See above, p.12.

2. See above, pp.40-1.

3. 'Iqd, III, p.320; Aghānī, II, p.329; X, p.28, XIII, p.134; apud Ayyām, pp.283-5.

travelled especially when the tribes were anxious during the raids to know the whereabouts of the enemy. Here is an example of a traveller feeding information to a raiding party.

The Banū Dubāb and the Banū Ja'far (both were the branches of the Banū 'Āmir) were at odds with each other. Once, the Banū Dubāb were travelling to some destination when they happened to meet a traveller named Mazīd b. Sahm of the Banū Ghanī. The Banū Dubāb said to each other that Mazīd was a traveller and they should try to get some information from him about the Banū Ja'far. Then they asked him about it and he told them that he had seen a herd belonging to their enemy nearby.⁽¹⁾

In this example a traveller furnished the invaders with information useful to them because they had treated him with respect but the following example is of a traveller who was treated in a bad manner by the raiders and he, therefore, spied against them.

During the Day of Shi'b Jabla, the Banū Tamīm, the Banū Asad and the Banū Ghatafān were advancing towards the territory of the Banū 'Āmir for a surprise attack. En route they happened to meet a person named Karb b. Ṣafwān of the Banū Sa'd whom they asked about his activities. He told them that he was searching for his lost camel. They refused to believe him saying that he wanted to warn (an tundhira) their enemy about their attack and would not let him go until he promised not to

1. Naqā'id, p.938 and Mu'jam al-Bulḍān, VIII, p.450; apud Ayyām, pp.304-5.

speak to anybody about their attack.

On regaining his freedom Karb hurriedly went to the Banū 'Āmir and devised a stratagem to warn them about the danger within the limits of his oath. He took his cloak and put some dust and thorns in it. Then he took two Yemenite cloaks, another red cloak and ten black stones and threw them all towards the Banū 'Āmir. Mu'āwiya b. Qushayr of that tribe carried this material to Ahwaṣ, leader of the tribe, and told him that somebody had thrown it towards them. Ahwaṣ asked Qays b. Zuhayr about it who told him that somebody who seemed to be under oath not to speak had tried to inform them about some danger. He explained that the warner wanted to tell them that the invaders were as numerous as particles of dust. By the thorns he wished to indicate their strength which was in abundance. With the two Yemenite cloaks he was trying to inform them of the presence of two Yemenite tribes among the invaders while the red cloak seemed to indicate the presence of Ḥāḡib b. Zurāra of the Banū Tamīm among them. Qays further explained that ten black stones meant that the enemy might reach them in ten nights' time. This warning proved to be very useful for the Banū 'Āmir because they prepared themselves for the battle. When the invaders attacked them the Banū 'Āmir repelled their raid and killed their leader Ḥāḡib b. Zurāra.⁽¹⁾

In this example Karb did not belong to the Banū 'Āmir and

1. Naqā'id, II, pp.660-61; Kāmil, I, pp.435-6; Ayyām, p.354. Aghānī describes this event with a slight difference in details. See XI, p.139.

was not in the service of that tribe. He seemed to be conducting his own business but the Banū Tamīm thought he was spying for the Banū 'Āmir and treated him in a bad manner. This act of theirs made him a real nadhīr and he went to the Banū 'Āmir and warned them of the forthcoming danger in codified form.

Traitors

Traitors or deserters were a very useful source of information for the Arabs about their enemies. Here is an example of this sort.

The Banū Rabī'a were camping at a well called Mabā'id when a slave belonging to one of them managed to escape and reached the territory of the Banū Tamīm. He told them that the Banū Rabī'a were camping at such-and-such a place. Now, the Banū Tamīm had a feud with the Banū Rabī'a which was still unresolved. They, therefore, attacked their enemies on the basis of information achieved through the slave.⁽¹⁾

Traders

Traders have always been a source of information about the enemy. The example of Qasīr mentioned in the section on regular spies⁽²⁾ and of the woman sent toward the Banū Ghani to find out the murderer of Zuhayr's son⁽³⁾ may also be

1. 'Iqd, III, p.345.

2. See above, pp.56-7.

3. See above, p.12.

mentioned under this heading.

How spies communicated information back to their tribes

Pre-Islamic spies had very limited resources at their disposal to convey information about the enemy to their tribes. Usually this act was performed by the personal journeys of the spies themselves. Sometimes, however, they used to convey intelligence by waving certain kinds of cloth,⁽¹⁾ if distance permitted them to do so. If they were unable to travel because of imprisonment or some other reason they would send messengers to their tribes with messages in codified form as did the sister of Zuhayr b. Janāb⁽²⁾ and Nāshib b. Bashāma.⁽³⁾

The last two examples along with the examples of Hārith b. 'Amr⁽⁴⁾ who was sent by Khālīd b. Ja'far to spy on Zuhayr b. Jadhīma and Karb b. Safwān⁽⁵⁾ indicate that the use of codes was fairly common in the intelligence activities of pre-Islamic Arab spies. Jawwād 'Alī⁽⁶⁾ has given some codes and their meaning but he does not give a comprehensive list. A list of the codes used on different occasions with their likely meanings is now given below.

1. See Gindī, p.186 where he quotes a poet saying,

"When the scout signalled with his robe,
the horses were watered and the grooms
poured away the remainder.

Then the attendants took charge of the
camels, while the cavalry raised against
the enemy were given the order by their
trusted leader to range over enemy territory."

2. See above, p.62.

3. See above, pp.59-60.

4. See above, pp.12-3.

5. See above, pp.64-5.

6. Op. cit., V, pp.437-8.

1. Milk indicates the presence of a weak enemy with the prospect of booty nearby.
2. Thorns indicate a mighty army but broken thorns means an army suffering from disunity.
3. A handful of dust or sand means a force consisting of numerous soldiers.
4. A Yemenite cloak means a Yemenite Arab tribe.
5. A black stone means night.
6. A reference to the sun means that a fact is obvious.
7. A red camel means a mountain.
8. An ordinary camel means desert.
9. Boxthorns with leaves mean the enemy has taken up arms.

No doubt other codes were also in use but in the present state of knowledge these are the main terms which are found in extant sources. Moreover, it may be noted that the traitors and the wise men of the tribe were in a position to reveal the meaning of a code used at a particular time. Therefore, the above codes cannot be regarded as a permanent arrangement. On the contrary, it can be suggested that a particular code may have been used only once.

The discussion so far has presented a general picture of the intelligence network of the pre-Islamic Arabs. It has become obvious that the pagan Arabs, when on the offensive, were accustomed to sending spies towards the enemy to get information about its strength, position and the expected booty before planning a raid. The defenders, too, kept themselves abreast of the latest developments in the neighbouring lands

with the help of their own spies who sometimes used to work in the ranks of the would-be aggressors and sometimes used to patrol in the outskirts of their own tribal territories.

Occasional travellers were a useful source of information about the land through which they had travelled for those who could capture them. Captured enemy spies were forced to reveal their own secrets. Matrimonial relationships with the enemy were fully utilised and codes were used to convey secrets.

The preceding evidence suggests that espionage among the pre-Islamic Arabs was well-developed. It was such a system which the Prophet received as an inheritance. Later on we will discuss the activities of the Prophet in this field. It is interesting to note that he not only made use of this existing framework but that he developed it further according to his own needs and requirements. But first of all we must answer the question of why the Prophet needed to indulge in such activities at all.

CHAPTER III

WHY THE PROPHET UNDERTOOK ESPIONAGE ACTIVITIES

The Prophet faced three main enemies during his Medinan career (622-632 A.D.). These were the Meccans and their confederates,⁽¹⁾ the Jews of Medina and Khaybar, and the Munāfiqūn of Medina. These groups had collectively a superior and decisive strength against Muḥammad. For the success of his mission and to foresee any hostile activity on the part of these

1. In the battle of Uhud the Meccan army included aḥābīsh [which included the Banū Ḥārith, the Banū Adal, Al-Qāra, and al-Dīsh (the last three branches of the Banū al-Hawn b. Khuzayma) the Banū Nufātha and the Banū Ḥayā and the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq (both branches of the Banū Khuzā'a)], the Banū Thaḳīf, the Banū Kināna and the people of Tihāma, the coastal strip between the Ḥijāz and the Red Sea. The force which laid siege to Medina in 627 A.D. under the command of Abū Sufyān consisted of, along with the Jews, the Banū Fazāra, the Banū Murra and the Banū Ashja' (all parts of the Banū Ghatafān). I. Hishām, II, pp.65, 156. The presence of these tribes in the ranks of the Quraysh during their struggle to finish the Prophet off strongly suggests that the Quraysh had close ties with these tribes. For further information on aḥābīsh see W.M. Watt, Muḥammad at Mecca (Oxford, 1953), pp.154-7.

enemies the Prophet had to keep a constant watch on them. There was, however, another element to be watched carefully; this consisted of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār. The Muhājirūn were the people who migrated to Medina after their conversion to Islam with the Prophet or later joined him there from the Meccans or from the nomadic Arabs.⁽¹⁾ The Anṣār were the people of Medina who had accepted Islam either before or after the hijra. Since these groups may well have had amongst them people in contact with the enemy, the uneasiness of the Prophet during the Medinan period of his life was, therefore, fivefold. Let us have a look at the relations of the Prophet with these groups of his contemporaries and try to find out how dangerous they were for him and for his mission in order to establish that there was a need for espionage on the part of the Prophet.

First come the Meccans, the people of his own tribe the Quraysh, who had occupied Mecca and had become the custodians of its sanctuary, the Ka'ba⁽²⁾ under the leadership of Quṣayy

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1. But not after the conquest of Mecca in 8 A.H. because the hijra is said to have come to an end on this occasion. Amwāl, pp.310-11; al-Azraqī, Akhbār Makka, ed. Rushdī Ṣāliḥ Maḥṣas (Madrid, n.d.), II, p.165; al-Dārimī, Sunan, (Cairo, 1398 A.H.), II, p.239; al-Khafājī, Nasīm al-Riyād (Cairo, 1325-7 A.H.), I, p.159.
 2. Although there were other sanctuaries in Arabia bearing this name, such as the Ka'ba of Najrān venerated by the Banū Ḥārith b. Ka'b and the Ka'ba of Sindād venerated by Iyād in the region between al-Kūfa and al-Baṣra (though these cities were not yet built). None of these, however, acquired more

b. Kilāb by ousting the Banū Khuzā'a from Mecca a few generations earlier.⁽¹⁾ This Ka'ba was the leading cultic centre of Western Arabia and almost all the Arabs sought to travel to it for pilgrimage.⁽²⁾ An attempt made recently by Abraha al-Ashram, the famous Abyssinian viceroy in Yemen from A.D.525 to 571, to divert the attention of the Arabs from the Ka'ba towards his newly built temple called al-Qalīs had ended in complete failure.⁽³⁾ This had naturally enhanced the religious position of the Ka'ba and the Meccans.⁽⁴⁾ Deriving benefit from such a

importance than that of a local centre of worship or gathering. Al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Aṣnām, ed. A.Z. Pāsha (Cairo, 1343 A.H.), pp.44-5; al- A'shā, Dīwān (Beirut, 1960), p.25.

1. I. Hishām, I, p.78; Azraqī, op. cit., pp.100-107; al-Mas'ūdī, Murūj al-Dhahab, ed. Y.A. Dāghir (Beirut, 1978), II, p.32; al-Maydānī, Majma' al-Amthāl, ed. M.M.A. Ḥamīd ([Cairo?] , 1374 A.H.), p.216; Bidāya, II, pp.205-7.
2. Al-Kalbī, op. cit., pp.6, 33.
3. Ibid., pp.46-7; I. Hishām, I, pp.28-35; Azraqī, op. cit., I, pp.136-48; Ṭabarī, II, pp.131-7; Ṭabarī, Taf., XXX, pp.166-9; al-Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl (Cairo, 1330 A.H.), V, p.195; R.A. Nicholson, A Literary History of the Arabs (Cambridge, 1930), pp.65-9; S. Quṭub, Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān (Beirut, 1971), VIII, pp.664-8; M.J. Kister, "Some Reports Concerning Mecca", JESHO, XV (1972), pp.63-75.
4. I. Hishām records that after this incident the Arabs held the Quraysh in high respect and said "They are God's people, God hath fought for them and hath defended them against their enemies; and made poems on this matter." I, pp.37-8.

situation the Quraysh had established close relations with many tribes of the Peninsula and had extended their trading activities beyond the Arabian frontiers. They had also developed a very profitable industry of tourism in the name of the little and great pilgrimages.⁽¹⁾

As is well known, the Meccans like most of the Arabs (except the Jews and the Christians) were idol worshippers. As the prestige and the prosperity of the Meccans depended on the Ka'ba which housed many idols⁽²⁾ venerated by themselves and by those Arabs who sought to travel to it, one could not expect a favourable hearing if one attacked the idols and criticised idol worship. That is why the Prophet came under heavy attack from the Meccans who 'resolved to treat him as an enemy when he spoke disparagingly of their gods', as I. Hishām⁽³⁾ mentions. The Meccans feared that if they abandoned the idols, the flow of the visitors would cease, which would deprive them of one of

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1. During his stay at Mecca no pilgrim was allowed to consume the food brought by himself nor was he allowed to circumambulate the Ka'ba in his own garments. He had to obtain these things from the Meccans either as a gift or loan or by paying the price. Azraqī, op. cit., I, pp.177-82. See also Nicholson who writes that 'the Quraysh saw in the Ka'ba and its venerable cult the mainspring of their commercial property'. op. cit., p.154. See also Sha'ban who writes that the Meccan trade was dependent on its religious prestige. Islamic History (Cambridge 1971), I, p.3.
 2. Such as isāf, nā'ila and hubul.
 3. I, p.162.

their means of livelihood. The other source of their wealth was their trade with foreign countries and it too would come to an end because the safety of the caravans could not be guaranteed in the presence of hostile, idolatrous tribes on their route.

The Meccans did not want to die of starvation and if the Prophet could manage to guarantee their livelihood by providing a third source of income for them they were ready to accept his prophethood.⁽¹⁾ In their view such a source could only be agriculture so that they could live an independent life but it seemed impossible to them because their land was barren and water was scarce. I. Hishām mentions a proposal put forward to the Prophet by the Meccans in this respect. He says that the Quraysh once said to the Prophet,

"You know that no people are more short of land and water, and have a harder life than we do, so ask your Lord, who has sent you, to remove for us these mountains which shut us in, and to straighten our country for us,

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1. As they accepted his prophethood after the conquest of Mecca (630 A.D.) because the situation had changed and the Prophet had established himself firmly in the Peninsula. To carry on opposing him meant the blockade of their caravan routes and the end of the flow of the visitors to their city because most of the Arabs had gone over to Muhammad. In this situation the acceptance of his prophethood not only guaranteed the continuation of the previous economic state of affairs but there were prospects of another source of income too in the shape of booty which they realised after the battle of Hunayn immediately after their own submission.

and to open up its rivers like those of Syria and 'Irāq.'⁽¹⁾

When the Prophet refused to perform this 'miracle' the Meccans resolved to protect their life-blood, the idols.⁽²⁾ We do not need, however, to give a detailed account of the hostilities between the Quraysh and the Prophet because they are well-known. We, therefore, pass on to the fact that due to the vigorous opposition from the Meccans to the Prophet and the latter's realisation of the fact that his struggle of more than a decade had shown no positive results in Mecca⁽³⁾ he decided to search for new horizons. After two years of deliberations and negotiations

1. I. Hishām, I, p.181.

2. See Lewis who holds the opinion that 'the opposition of the Meccans was largely economic in origin'. The Arabs in History (London, 1970), pp.39-40. See also Gibb who writes that

'the resistance of the Meccans appears to have been not so much of their conservatism or even to religious disbelief as to political and economic causes. They were afraid of the effects that his (Prophetic) preaching might have on their economic prosperity, and especially that his pure monotheism might injure the economic assets of their sanctuaries'.

Islam, (Oxford, 1969), p.18.

3. Fazlur Rahmān, however, holds the opinion that it would be impossible to hold that the Prophet had reached an absolutely forlorn stage or had been utterly rejected in Mecca because the Medinans would have never invited him to be their religious and political leader if his prestige had been low in his home town. Islam (London, 1966), p.18.

he at last found a place where he migrated along with his companions in Sep. 622 A.D. This place was called Yathrib but later on it became known as Medina.

The Anṣār (people of Medina) were generally farmers and the Muhājirūn had come from a city where people were engaged in trading activities to earn their livelihood and had no experience of farming. Most of the Muhājirūn were poor and had no money to start a business. In a situation where the newcomers had neither the skill necessary for farming nor the money necessary to set up a business their leader was confronted with the problem of providing them with food and lodging through some other source. Soon a source was discovered and it was to plunder the Meccan caravans.⁽¹⁾ Since it was the Meccans who had maltreated the Prophet and his Muhājirūn followers so far he, therefore, focussed the attention of the latter on the caravans of the Meccans. Their route from Mecca to Syria was between Medina and the coast of the Red Sea and the Meccans had to pass within a range of eighty miles of Medina even if they kept as close to the coast as possible.⁽²⁾ Although the first few attempts to

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1. R. Bell, Introduction to the Qur'ān (Edinburgh, 1953), p.23; F. Gabrieli, Muhammad and the Conquests of Islam, trans. V. Luling and R. Linell (London, 1977), p.68; Watt goes further and tells us that Muḥammad had planned to raid the Meccan caravans before he went to Medina. Society, p.11.
 2. Watt, Medina, p.2.

plunder the Meccan caravans did not succeed,⁽¹⁾ the Meccans realised the consequences of the migration of the Prophet. They became fully aware that the Prophet had become more dangerous to them than if he were still in their city. So the migration of the Prophet to Medina exacerbated the enmity between him and the Meccans who would now be prepared to take any step to remove this danger from their caravan route. As the Prophet was not in Mecca, he needed information on their plans, movements, and preparations. Such an aim could only be achieved by means of intelligence.

The second group of the Prophet's contemporaries with whom he had to deal was the Muhājirūn. Some seventy of his followers had preceded him to Medina from Mecca and some others joined him there later immediately after his migration, such as 'Ayyāsh and Salma who managed to escape from imprisonment with the help of Walīd b. al-Walīd⁽²⁾. Miqdād b. 'Amr and 'Utba b. Ghazwān⁽³⁾ changed sides during the expedition of 'Ubayda, which took place before the battle of Badr and migrated to Medina. This group kept on increasing day by day and won great respect in the new community because they had left their homeland, relatives and properties for the sake of their new religion.

1. According to Ḥasan, I, p.107 these expeditions were sent out for spying purposes.

2. I. Sa'd, IV, p.132.

3. I. Hishām, I, p.360; I. Khayyāt, p.21; Ṭabarī, II, p.404.

These people belonged to different clans and tribes from all over Arabia. Although they had broken their previous ties, it was quite natural for them to have sympathetic feelings towards their relatives in case of danger. In such a situation it was likely that they might try to save their loved ones. This could undermine the success of the Prophet's mission. The sources have preserved for us some examples of such behaviour on the part of some of the Muhājirūn. Here are two such examples.

Before the start of the battle of Badr the Prophet according to I. Hishām and Ansāb advised his people not to kill al-‘Abbās because he had joined the Meccan force against his will. Abū Ḥudhayfa b. ‘Utba, one of the Muhājirūn, said that it would be strange 'to kill our fathers, brothers, sons and other family members and to spare al-‘Abbās' and he swore by God to kill him if he could lay his hand on al-‘Abbās. It is stated that when it was reported to the Prophet he complained to ‘Umar about it who sought permission to kill Abū Ḥudhayfa because he had become a hypocrite.⁽¹⁾

Another example has been preserved by some of the sources which is about Ḥāṭib b. Abī Balta‘a. It is stated that when the Prophet was making preparations to attack and capture Mecca

1. I. Hishām, I, p.283; Al-Balādhurī, Ansāb, ed. A.A. Dūrī (Beirut, 1398 A.H.), III, p.2; according to the latter source al-‘Abbās had written a letter to the Prophet informing him that he had joined the Meccan force as a courtesy towards the Quraysh and that he did not intend to fight against him. III, p.3.

in 8 A.H. Ḥaṭīb wrote a letter to the Meccans which contained secret information about the proposed attack. Ḥaṭīb, then, employed a woman to carry it to the Meccans. This letter was intercepted and the woman was captured by 'Alī and Zubayr while she was on her way to Mecca. When it came to be known that it was from Ḥaṭīb, 'Umar sought permission to kill him because he had become a hypocrite. The Prophet asked Ḥaṭīb why he had acted like that. Ḥaṭīb replied that although he believed in God and in his Prophet he was not a man of standing among the Quraysh and he had a son and family there and that he had to deal prudently with them for their sake.⁽¹⁾

Apart from these examples of occasional awakening of old sympathies there was always a possibility of regular enemy spies working at Medina in the guise of Muhājirūn. One such example is that of Furāt b. Ḥayyān. It is stated that after the battle of Badr the Meccans sent a caravan to 'Irāq under the guidance of Furāt. This caravan was intercepted by Zayd

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1. I. Hishām, II, pp.264-5; al-Shāfi'ī, Kitāb al-Umm (Būlāq, 1321-5 A.H.), IV, p.16; Wāqidī, II, pp.797-8; Amwāl, p.158; Musnad, II, pp.36, 143-4; Irshād, V, p.141; Abū Dā'ūd, Sunan, ed. M.M.A. Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1950), III, pp.64-5; Ṭabarī, III, pp.48-9; Ṭabarī, Taf, XXVIII, pp.36-7; al-Rāzī, Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb (Cairo, 1307-9 A.H.), VIII, Abu'l-Fidā, al-Mukhtasar ([Cairo?], 1325 A.H.), I, p.143; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.42; Isāba, I, p.300; Maqrīzī, pp.362-3; al-Zarqānī, Sharḥ al-Zarqānī 'alā al-Mawāhib (Cairo, 1325-8 A.H.), II, pp.296-7; Nayl, VIII, p.7.

b. Ḥāritha⁽¹⁾ who captured all the merchandise along with its guide Furāt. When brought to Medina Furāt converted to Islam and made Medina his residence. Sometime afterwards the Prophet ordered his companions to kill him because it was feared that he was a spy of Abū Sufyān.⁽²⁾

As head of a religious movement the Prophet constantly hoped and looked for new converts and found many such people during his Medinan career. At the same time there were possibilities of defections too and the would-be defectors were bound to be a useful source of secret information for his enemies about his activities. One example of such a defection is that of 'Abdallāh b. Sa'd. He was one of the Muhājirūn and was one of the secretaries of the Prophet who used to write down revelations for him. He apostatised and fled to Mecca where he published strange stories about the revelations and caused great harm to the Prophet's mission. When the Prophet conquered Mecca he ordered his men to search for 'Abdallāh in order to kill him. 'Abdallāh was a foster brother of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān. He, therefore, took refuge with the latter. 'Uthmān took him to the Prophet and asked for mercy. The Prophet remained silent but 'Uthmān kept on requesting pardon. At last the Prophet pardoned him and they went away. But his crime was so serious that after their departure the Prophet complained to his audience and asked why they had not killed Sa'd while he

1. I. Hishām, II, p.58.

2. Abū Dā'ūd, op. cit., III, p.66; Nayl, VIII, p.7.

was silent.⁽¹⁾

Another person ordered to be killed on this occasion was 'Abdallāh b. Khaṭal of the Banū Taym b. Ghālib. He had migrated to Medina after his conversion. The Prophet once sent him to collect zakāt in company of one of the Anṣār. During their journey he killed his servant and apostatised. He fled to Mecca where he employed two singing girls who used to sing satirical songs about the Prophet. Sa'd b. Hurayth and Abū Barza al-Aslāmī carried out the order of the Prophet and killed Ibn Khaṭal.⁽²⁾

Another such person was Miqyas b. Ḥubāba (or Ṣubāba) who belonged to the Banū Kalb b. 'Awf and before his conversion used to live among the Banū Sahm at Mecca. After his conversion he migrated to Medina. His brother Hāshim was also among the Muhājirūn but was killed in a battle by a member of the Anṣār by mistake. Miqyas killed the murderer of his brother and fled to Mecca. After the conquest of Mecca the Prophet issued orders to search for Miqyas in order to kill him.⁽³⁾

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1. I. Hishām, II, p.271; Wāqidī, II, pp.855-6; Amwāl, p.158; Ibn Qutayba, Kitāb al-Ma'ārif (Cairo, 1300 A.H.), p.103; Tanbīh (B), pp.232-3; Usūl, II, p.208; Kanz, X, p.320; R. Bell, Introduction to the Qur'ān (Edinburgh, 1953), p.18.
 2. I. Hishām, II, pp.271-2; Amwāl, pp.158, 159, 192; al-Dārimī, Sunan (Cairo, 1398 A.H.), II, p.211; Futūḥ, p.53; Tanbīh (B), p.233; Kanz, X, p.323.
 3. Wāqidī, II, pp.861-2; Amwāl, p.158; Futūḥ, pp.53-4; Tanbīh (B), p.233; Abu'l-Fidā, op. cit., I, p.137.

The Prophet was a stranger at Medina and although many of the Medinans had accepted his religion and were ready to defend him against his enemies, his real strength was the Muhārijūn. These examples of the activities of some of the Muhājirūn indicate that all was not well in their ranks and it was necessary for the Prophet to keep the suspects under close watch. This object could only be achieved by means of intelligence.

The third group of the Prophet's contemporaries were the Anṣār. Until the conquest of Mecca in 8 A.H. this group formed the main body of support to the Prophet.⁽¹⁾ Most of the members of this group were faithful followers of the Prophet and they had provided Muḥammad's Meccan followers with refuge and supported them against all their enemies. In spite of their remarkable services to the Prophet's mission they were, after all, human beings and were likely to indulge in unworthy activities which could undermine the success of the Prophet's mission. Some sources have preserved for us some examples of such activities on the part of the Anṣār.

Usayd b. Ḥudayr was among the early converts who belonged to the Anṣār and was a chief of considerable position because his father had led one of the warring factions in the battle of

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1. The numbers of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār who fought for the Prophet in the battle of Badr or received a share from the booty captured during this battle are said to have been 83 and 231 respectively. I. Hishām, II, p.26. The numbers of the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār who took part in the conquest of Mecca are said to have been 700 and 4000 respectively. Wāqidī, II, p.800.

Bu'āth. Usayd did not take part in the battle of Badr at a time when the Prophet was suffering so badly from the shortage of men. When the Prophet returned to Medina victorious, Usayd, however, approached the Prophet and excused himself saying that he had never thought that there would be any fight. Otherwise he would have been among the Prophet's ranks. (1)

Ḥārith b. Suwayd and Mujadhdhar b. Dhiyād belonged to the Anṣār and an unresolved feud existed between them. They participated in the battle of Uhud (3 A.H.). Ḥārith instead of fighting the Meccans treacherously attacked and killed Mujadhdhar. After the battle the Prophet came to know about this incident and ordered Ḥārith to be executed for his crime and the order was carried out. (2)

During the battle of al-Khandiq Muḥammad entered into negotiations with 'Uyayna b. Ḥiṣn (a leader of the Banū Ghatafān) in an attempt to bribe him to lift the siege. He had offered the enemy leader one third of the date crops of Medina and 'Uyayna had accepted the offer with some amendment but the Prophet had to drop the project because Sa'd b. 'Ubāda and Sa'd b. Mu'ādh, leaders of the Anṣār, had refused to endorse the agreement. (3)

1. Wāqidī, I, pp.116-7; Watt, Medina, p.15.

2. Al-Shāfi'ī, op. cit., IV, p.203, Wāqidī, I, pp.304-5; Istī'āb, III, p.481; Isāba, III, p.364.

3. I. Hishām, II, p.161; Wāqidī, II, pp.477-8; Amwāl, pp.235-6; I. Sa'd, II, p.69; Ṭabarī, II, p.573; Istī'āb, II, p.38; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.30; Isāba, II, p.36; Maqrīzī, pp.235-6; J. Gould, "A Study of Two Rivalries in the Umma (1-11 A.H.)", unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Edinburgh, 1975-6), p.130.

When the Banū Qurayza, a Jewish tribe of Medina, were besieged by the Prophet in 5 A.H., they asked him to send Abū Lubāba b. 'Abd al-Mundhir of the Banū Aws for consultations. The Prophet advised Abū Lubāba to go and see what the Jews had to say. When Abū Lubāba met the Jews they asked him what would happen to them in case of their surrender. Abū Lubāba disclosed the Prophet's intention that in that case they would be slaughtered. He is said to have been ashamed afterwards of his dishonesty towards the Prophet.⁽¹⁾

The attitude of Ḥassān b. Thābit (the court poet of the Prophet who belonged to the Banū Khazraj) towards the Prophet and his mission appears to have been unsatisfactory on at least three occasions.

1. When the Banū al-Nadīr were leaving their quarters in order to comply with the Prophet's demand to go into exile, Ḥassān openly expressed his grief and sorrow over their departure.⁽²⁾

2. He took active part, along with some others, in slandering 'Ā'isha (wife of the Prophet) and received the legal punishment for his part in this scandal.⁽³⁾

1. 'Urwa, p.187; Wāqidī, II, p.506; Ṭabarī, Taf., XXI, p.88.

2. Wāqidī, I, p.375; W.Arafāt, "A Critical Introduction to the Study of the Poems Ascribed to Ḥassān ibn Thābit", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (London, 1954), p.7.

3. Wāqidī, II, p.434; I. Hishām, II, p.207; Ṭabarī, Taf., XVIII, p.61; Kindī, The Apology of el-Kindī (London, 1885), p.82.

3. Ḥassān is said to have composed verses to express his deep concern over the large numbers coming to Medina, after the battle of al-Khandiq, and their resulting influence. One such verse is as follows,

"The scum have become powerful and numerous,
and the son of al-Furay'a (the poet himself)
has become insignificant in the town." (1)

The Prophet is said to have been very disturbed by such verses and expressed his wish to silence the poet.

The Prophet distributed the booty captured at Hunayn (8 A.H.) among his Muhājirūn followers, new converts and the non-Muslim chiefs in his army perhaps due to political reasons and neglected the Anṣār. It is stated that the Anṣār objected to the Prophet's action and Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, one of their leaders, went to see the Prophet on their behalf. The Prophet became worried at the situation and then made a passionate speech to cool down the temper of the Anṣār. (2)

1.

امسى الخلايس قد عزوا وقد كثرُوا

واهن الفريمة امسى بيضة البلد

Ḥassān b. Thābit, Dīwān, ed. H. Hirschfeld (Leyden, 1910), p.62; I. Hishām, II, p.208 with the word جلايب (tramps)

instead of خلايس . For further details about such verses and Ḥassān's general behaviour towards the Prophet and his cause see 'Arafāt, op. cit., pp.7-15; Idem, "A Controversial Incident and the Related Poem in the Life of Ḥassān b. Thābit", BSOAS (1955), pp. 197-205.

2. 'Urwa, pp.218-9; I. Hishām, II, pp.324-5; Ṭabarī, Taf., X, p.62; al-Bayhaqī, Sunan (Hyderabad Deccan, 1344-53 A.H.), IV, p.337.

These examples clearly indicate that the Prophet could not afford to leave the Ansār on their own and a close watch was necessary to scrutinise their activities in order to avoid unfavourable circumstances (espionage is one of the best possible means to achieve this end).

The fourth group of the Prophet's contemporaries were the Jews. According to legend, as recorded in Encyclopaedia Judaica,

"The Jewish community (at Medina) dates from Moses' war against the Amalkites, the Babylonian exile (c. 586 B.C.), Antiochus IV's persecutions, and the defeat by Rome (70 A.D.). In any case, by the early centuries of the Christian era the population of Medina consisted mostly of Jewish tribes, either of Judean-Palestinian, mixed Judeo-Arabic, or Arab proselyte origin." (1)

Sergeant states that thirteen Jewish tribes inhabited the oasis of Medina⁽²⁾ but according to Samhūdī there were some twenty Jewish tribes who had fifty nine ātām.⁽³⁾ Among all the Jewish tribes three were prominent, the Banū Qaynuqā', the Banū al-Nadīr and the Banū Qurayza. The Banū Qaynuqā', who were the earliest settlers, resided in the central market. They formed a guild of goldsmiths and possessed two strong castles in the north of Medina. They had no agricultural lands but had a compact settlement and conducted a market. The Banū al-Nadīr

1. XI, col., 1211.

2. R.B. Sergeant, "The Sunnah Jāmi'ah", BSOAS, XLI (1978), p.3.

3. Samhūdī, I, p.116. Ātām were strongholds like forts in which they could defend themselves against the enemy.

Samhūdī, I, p.114.

were the owners of some of the richest lands and cultivated date palms west of the city. The Banū Qurayza occupied an area in the south-eastern part of the town. Other tribes included the Tha'lba who resided in the north east of the town and the 'Anī, a tribe of Arab proselytes who lived in the Qubā area south of Medina.⁽¹⁾

There are two different estimates of the Jewish population at Medina in the period preceding the hijra. According to Encyclopaedia Judaica⁽²⁾ the Jews numbered between 8,000 to 10,000. Barakāt's⁽³⁾ estimate is between 36,000 to 42,000. To form our own view let us consult Ibn Hishām who records that the Banū Qaynuqā' provided 700 men to protect 'Abdallāh b. Ubayy and 600 to 900 fighting men were executed by the Prophet after the battle of al-Khandiq who belonged to the Banū Qurayza. It means that the numbers of the fighting male members of these two tribes were at least 1,300. If one estimates that each man had five dependents, which included mother, wives, daughters, sons below the fighting age and fathers of old age, this would make the population of these two tribes approximately 6,500. If the other Jewish tribes were even one third of these two the total population was about 18,500, if we consider the number of their tribes given by Sergeant as authentic, or

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1. EJ, XI, col., 1211; Barakāt Ahmad, Muhammad and the Jews (New Delhi, 1979), p.30; JE, VIII, p.498.
 2. EJ, XI, col., 1212.
 3. Op. cit., p.43.

about 26,000 if we consider Samhūdī's number as authentic. In any case, it was a large population for the Arabian peninsula at that time because at the same time Mecca had a population of about 5,000 people.⁽¹⁾

The Jews of Medina, however, lost their dominance to certain Arab tribes, the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj who had come to live at Medina from south Arabia because the breaking of the Ma'rib dam had ruined their lands in the middle of the fifth century. The transfer of power was gradual and it was completed some time in the period preceding the hijra. Henceforth the Jews aligned themselves with the Aws or the Khazraj.

As for the relations between the Prophet and the Jews, the Jewish Encyclopaedia records that,

'when the Prophet first went to Medina he was inclined to be friendly towards the Jews.'⁽²⁾

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1. W.M.Watt, Islamic Political Thought (Edinburgh, 1968), p.3; the Meccans who took part in the battle of Badr are said to have been between 900 and 1000. I. Hishām, I, p.376. Moreover, 40 or 70 Meccans were with Abū Sufyān (see below, p.120) who apparently did not take part in the battle of Badr which makes the total about 1000 men capable of bearing arms because Ibn Hishām records that all the Meccans (except the caravaners) had taken part in the battle. I. Hishām, I, p.371; Watt seems to add 4 dependents to each fighting man which makes the population of Mecca 5,000.
 2. VIII, p.423.

According to this source the Prophet made certain concessions to them on the grounds of religion, and adopted as their qibla - Jerusalem - in the hope of winning them over.⁽¹⁾ But, according to the same source,

"The Jews ridiculed him, and delighted in drawing him into arguments to expose his ignorance; so that the conciliatory attitude of the Prophet soon changed to enmity."⁽²⁾

Fazlur Rahmān and Barakāt put forward a different point of view. Rahmān says that the Prophet had appointed Jerusalem as the qibla while he was still at Mecca in order to emphasise the distinction between the pagans and the Muslims and not after the hijra in order to woo the Jews.⁽³⁾ Barakāt says that the Prophet knew before his arrival in Medina that he would be

1. JE, VIII, p.423.

2. Ibid., VIII, p.423.

See also Lewis who writes that,

"Muhammad had hoped to find friendly welcome among the Jews" op. cit., p.42

and Katsh who holds the opinion that the Prophet never intended to establish Islam as a new religion and in the beginning he believed that both Jews and Christians would welcome him. Judaism in Islam (New York, 1954), p.XVII; and H.A.R. Gibb, op. cit., p.30.

3. Fazlur Rahmān, op. cit., p.20.

rejected by the Jews.⁽¹⁾ Therefore the stories of the Prophet's conciliatory attitude towards the Jews in the field of religion are baseless.

Whatever the case may be, it is generally agreed that the main opposition that the Prophet faced at Medina came from the

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1. Barakat, op. cit., p.118. He quotes some verses of the Qur'ān to support his theory such as the following,

"We settled the Children of Israel in a beautiful dwelling-place and provided for them sustenance of the best; it was after knowledge had been granted to them, that they fell into schisms. Verily God will judge between them as to the schisms amongst them, on the Day of Judgement." X:93

According to Wherry, this verse is undoubtedly of Meccan origin and the knowledge intended here is that of the Qur'ān and the allusion is to the rejection of Muhammad by the Jews. A Comprehensive Commentary on the Qur'ān (London, 1882-90), II, p.338. Barakāt also quotes the Qur'ānic verses XVII:4-10 which are regarded as Meccan [see al-Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl (Cairo, 1330 A.H.), III, p.195; Usūl, II, p.210; Jalālayn, I, p.140; G. Sale, The Koran (London, n.d.), p.271] and says that,

"These verses do not point towards an Apostle looking forward to being accepted by the Jews". op. cit., p.118.

On the basis of the above verses Barakāt holds the opinion that the Prophet from the very beginning had an idea of the Jewish rejection to his claim. Op. cit., p.117.

Jews in spite of the fact that some of them converted to Islam⁽¹⁾ and some of them fought⁽²⁾ or offered to fight⁽³⁾ for him. The Prophet, however, offered them the terms of sahīfa but the Jews did not take him seriously and adopted a hostile attitude towards him. Let us have a glimpse of their hostile activities towards the Prophet and his mission.

Once the Jews tried to rekindle the past hostilities of the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj by reciting poems about the battle of the Bu‘āth in order to destroy the base of the Prophet at Medina. On this occasion the situation had become so tense that the said groups of the Ansār had reached the brink of war but the Prophet came and cooled down their tempers.⁽⁴⁾

Once Abū Sufyān made a raid on the suburbs of Medina and met Sallām b. Mishkam, a Jewish leader, by night who furnished him with the secret information about the Prophet's state of affairs.⁽⁵⁾ On another occasion they formed a plot to kill

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1. Such as ‘Abdallāh b. Sallām, Yāmīn b. ‘Umayr, Sa‘īd b. Wahab, etc. Wāqidī, I, p.373; Tabarī, Taf. XXVI, p.7; Maqrīzī, p.46.
 2. Amwāl, p.296;
Ibn al-‘Arabī, Sahīh al-Tirmidhī bi Sharh Ibn al-‘Arabī, (Cairo, 1931-4), VII, p.49.
 3. Wāqidī, I, p.215; Maqrīzī, p.118.
 4. I.Hishām, I, pp.336-7; Tabarī, Taf., IV, p.24.
 5. I. Hishām, II, p.55; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.22; Maqrīzī, p.106; JE, VIII, p.423; Dermenghen, op. cit., p.212; Abū Zahra, Khātam al-Nabiyyīn (Doha, 1400 A.H.), II, p.808.

the Prophet treacherously but the latter came to know of this and left the premises.⁽¹⁾

Once they sent a deputation to the Quraysh and the Banū Ghatafān inviting them to form an alliance (626 A.D.) against the Prophet and gave him a very tough time by laying siege to Medina.⁽²⁾

When the preparations of the expedition to Tabūk (630 A.D.) were under way the Jews tried to sow the seeds of disaffection among the Muslims and provided a base to the Munāfiqūn for their subversive activities.⁽³⁾

Such activities as trying to assassinate the Prophet, trying to dislodge him by ruining his base of power, spying on him for his enemies, trying to collect all sorts of enemies to finish him off, could only be regarded from Muḥammad's standpoint as major offences. He naturally could not afford to close his eyes to the people engaged in such activities who were in such large numbers, as discussed earlier⁽⁴⁾, within his stronghold. It was necessary on his part to keep a close watch on them and it was only possible through espionage.

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1. I. Hishām, II, pp.142-3; Wāqidī, I, pp.364-6; Maqrīzī, p.178; al-Suyūṭī, al-Khasā'is al-Kubrā, ed. M.K.Harrās (Cairo, 1386 A.H.), I, p.525.
 2. I. Hishām, II, p.156; Ṭabarī, Taf., XXI, p.74; JE, VIII, p.423.
 3. I. Hishām, II, p.332; Isāba, II, p.205.
 4. See above, pp.87-8.

The fifth group of the Prophet's contemporaries were the Munāfiqūn⁽¹⁾ who were the 'influential residents of Medina who

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1. According to Sergeant (op. cit., p.11) the term munāfiq is derived from the word nafaqa in the general sense of maintenance which is a kind of tax paid by the Mu'minīn and the Jews alike when the umma is at war. Because the Jews and some Medinans were reluctant to pay contributions towards what did not lie in their interests 'a distinction is made by the Qur'ān between the munāfiq who pays nafaqa and is praiseworthy, and the munāfiq who is upbraided along with the Jews.' Hence the term munāfiq originally indicated both kinds of taxpayers but later on at a very early stage this term came to mean hypocrites, falsely pretending to be Muslims. Al-Qur'ān mentions such people in the following verses:

"Of the people there are some who say 'we believe in God and in the Last Day; but they do not (really) believe" II:8

"When it is said to them: 'Believe as the others believe', They say, 'Shall we believe as the fools believe?'" II:13

"When they meet those who believe, they say: 'We believe'; but when they are alone with their evil ones, they say: 'We are really with you: we (were) only jesting'" II:14

"When the hypocrites come to thee, they say, 'We bear witness that thou art indeed the Apostle of God'. Yea God knoweth that thou art indeed His Apostle, and God beareth witness that the hypocrites are indeed liars." LXIII:1

had ostensibly embraced Islam, but had no intention of surrendering their position to the intruders from Mecca,⁽¹⁾ and 'criticized Muḥammad's political leadership'.⁽²⁾ It must be remembered that Muḥammad was not welcomed to Medina by all the citizens but was, at best, tolerated by a large proportion of the population.⁽³⁾ A considerable number of these tolerators later on gathered around Ibn Ubayy who is said to have been robbed of his dearly cherished hopes of becoming the leader of Medina because of the appearance of Muḥammad on the scene⁽⁴⁾ and adopted a hostile attitude towards the Prophet. Although they were united in opposition to the Prophet, their motives for such an attitude were different. Some of them are said to have had strong relations with the Jews and this relationship prevented them from embracing Islam wholeheartedly. Some of them are said to have been lukewarm and the others objected to the increasing numbers and influence of the Muhājirūn in Medina.⁽⁵⁾

In the sources the term munāfiq (to denote hypocrites) is used for different categories of the Prophet's contemporaries.

1. L.B. Jones, The People of the Mosque (London, 1932), p.23.

2. F.M. Donner, "Muḥammad's Political Consolidation in Arabia up to the Conquest of Mecca", MW, LXIX (1979), p.231.

3. Gould, op. cit., p.170.

4. I. Hishām, II, p.200; Wāqidī, II, p.419.

5. W. Muir, The Life of Mohammad (Edinburgh, 1912), pp.181-2; Watt, Medina, pp. 176, 178; Donner, op. cit., p.231.

For instance, it is used for some Meccan followers of the Prophet such as Abū Ḥudhayfa⁽¹⁾ and Ḥaṭīb⁽²⁾. Some of the Jews of Medina are described as Munāfiqūn⁽³⁾ and some of the Arab tribesmen around Medina are placed in this category.⁽⁴⁾ But generally this term is used for Ibn Ubayy and his party, as mentioned above, from the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj.

The battle of Badr (624 A.D.) is apparently the first occasion when this term first came into use. It is interesting to note that an earlier mentioned Muhājir, Abū Ḥudhayfa b. 'Utba, was the first person to be called a Munāfiq and this occurred during the battle of Badr. After this battle the Prophet sent Zayd b. Ḥāritha to Medina with the news of his victory over

1. See above, p. 78.

2. See above, pp. 78-9.

3. According to I. Hishām the following Jews had embraced Islam hypocritically. Sa'd. b. Ḥunayf; Zayd b. al-Luṣayt; Nu'mān b. 'Awfā; 'Uthmān b. 'Awfā; Rāfi' b. Ḥuraymila; Rifā'a b. Zayd; Silsila b. Barhām and Kināna b. Ṣūriyā. I, pp.309-10. See also Ṭabarī, Taf., VI, p.169; Ibn Kathīr, Sīrat al-Nawīyya, ed. M.A. Wāḥid (Cairo, 1964), p.349. Guillaume, however, expresses his doubts about the origin of these people and says,

'it is by no means certain that these men were Jews but they may well have been half converts to Judaism like so many of the inhabitants of Medina'.

The Life of Muhammad (Lahore, 1965), p.246.

4. al-Qur'ān, IX:101. وَمِنْ حَوْلِكَ مِنَ الْأَعْرَابِ مُنَافِقُونَ
(Certain of the desert Arabs round you are hypocrites.)

the Meccans. Some of the sources record that the Munāfiqūn were spreading the false news of Muḥammad's defeat and the killing of his top aides including himself.⁽¹⁾ After this event this group is mentioned frequently in the sources and one of the chapters of al-Qur'ān is entitled al-Munāfiqūn.

As to the numbers of this group, we have no definite idea. Ibn Hishām gives a list of some members of this group which includes 'Abdallāh b. Ubayy, Julās b. Suwayd, Bijād b. 'Uthmān, Natal b. Hārith, Wadī'a b. Thābit and Jad b. Qays.⁽²⁾ The Prophet is said to have secretly informed Hudhayfa b. al-Yamān about the names of twelve Munāfiqūn. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb is said to have been in the habit of asking Hudhayfa before conducting anyone's funeral service whether that particular person was included in that list⁽³⁾ because to conduct or to participate in the funeral services of the Munāfiqūn was forbidden at the time of the death of Ibn Ubayy.⁽⁴⁾ Ibn

1. Wāqidī, I, p.115; Kanz, X, p.263.

2. I. Hishām, I, pp.312-7.

3. Ṭabarī, Taf., XI, p.8.

4. See Musnad, I, p.195 where a tradition is recorded that when Ibn Ubayy died the Prophet conducted his funeral service in spite of 'Umar's opposition but later on he was forbidden by God to do so on the death of any other Munāfiq (ولانصل على احدهم مات ابداء). See also IV, p.311 of the same source.

Ḥabīb's list of the Munāfiqūn is a comparatively detailed one because it contains 38 names of the people who were known by this title.⁽¹⁾ Wāqidī mentions that some eighty of the Munāfiqūn had stayed behind when the Prophet left for Tabūk⁽²⁾ while a party of them went out with the Prophet. The term party (raht)⁽³⁾ in this case is difficult to define, no estimate is, therefore, possible on the numbers of the Munāfiqūn. There is, however, another event which gives an idea of their number. It is stated that when the Prophet left for Uhud, 'Abdallāh b. Ubayy deserted him accompanied by one third of the Prophet's original force of 1000 soldiers.⁽⁴⁾ Although it is not certain that all of these deserters were the Munāfiqūn, it may be assumed that the majority of these 300 men did belong to this group.

Whatever their numbers may have been, it is an established

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1. Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Muḥabbar (Hyderabad Deccan, 1942), pp.467-70.
 2. Wāqidī, III, p.995.
 3. Ibid., p.1003.
 4. Ibid., I, pp.219, 299; I. Hishām, II, p.67; 'Urwa, p.169; IbnQutayba, Kitāb al-Ma'ārif (Cairo, 1300 A.H.), p.52.

The sources provide evidence on the presence of the Munāfiqūn on the battlefield of Uhud in spite of the desertion of the said contingent of Ibn Ubayy. For instance, Ibn Hishām and Wāqidī mention Qazmān who fought very bravely and killed many Meccans but was a munāfiq. I. Hishām, II, p.82; Wāqidī, I, p.222; Ṭabarī, II, p.531 and another person mentioned by Ibn Hishām is Ḥārith b. Suwayd. II, p.82.

fact that they had adopted a hostile attitude towards the Prophet and his Muhājirūn followers from within the Medinan community. The sources record that during the expedition of the Banū Mustāliq the Munāfiqūn gave the Prophet a very tough time when a quarrel broke out between the Anṣār and the Muhājirūn. The Munāfiqūn tried their best to exploit the situation and Ibn Ubayy is reported to have been reminding the Anṣār of a well-known proverb "Fatten your dog and he will bite you" ((سَمِّنْ كَلْبَكَ يَأْكُلْكَ)⁽¹⁾ and expressing his intentions that as soon as he reached Medina he would expel the Prophet from the city.⁽²⁾ The situation had become so tense that if the Prophet had stayed there a bit longer an armed clash between the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār seemed inevitable. In this state of affairs the intelligence service of the Prophet came to his rescue. Zayd b. Arqam is said to have reported the activities of Ibn Ubayy to the Prophet⁽³⁾ who then ordered an immediate march which proved to be a very long one.⁽⁴⁾ Heat

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1. I. Hishām, II, p.199; Wāqidī, II, p.416; Ṭabarī, II, p.605.
 2. I. Hishām, II, p.199; Wāqidī, II, p.416; I. Sa'd, II, p.65; Ṭabarī, II, p.605; Ṭabarī, Taf., XXVIII, pp.66, 68; al-Rāzī, op. cit., VIII, p.157; Ibn Qayyim, Zād al-Ma'ād (Cairo, 1950), II, p.116; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.33; Wherry, op. cit., IV, p.147; Quṭub, op. cit., VIII, pp.109-10.
 3. I. Hishām, II, p.199; Wāqidī, II, p.417; I. Sa'd, II, p.65; Ṭabarī, II, p.605; Ṭabari, Taf., XXVIII, p.69.
 4. I. Hishām, II, p.200; Wāqidī, II, pp.418-9; Ṭabarī, II, pp.606-7.

and the fatigue of the journey overcame inflamed feelings and the Prophet, thus, managed to save the situation.

The list of the subversive activities of the Munāfiqūn is very long. They were among the Anṣār so no severe step could be taken against them because they could have undermined the Umma from within. In such a situation they were, in the words of Amir Ali, a source of considerable danger to the newborn commonwealth, and required unceasing watchfulness on the part of the Prophet.⁽¹⁾

In this chapter so far we have discussed the relations of the Prophet with different groups of his contemporaries. It has been pointed out that the Meccans and the Jews were against his mission and that they were ready to go as far as possible to ensure his downfall. The Munāfiqūn who belonged to Medina were working against the Prophet from within the community, and the ranks of the Muhājirūn and Anṣār, too, did not lack opposition to the Prophet. This situation when everyone, except a few, was an enemy or a possible spy or secret agent of the enemy was very dangerous for the Prophet. Success in the presence of so many odds seemed impossible but the Prophet made it possible with the help of espionage, along with other factors, which we are going to discuss in the coming pages.

1. The Spirit of Islam (London, 1965), p.57.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOURCES OF THE PROPHET TO GATHER INTELLIGENCE

The Prophet's espionage activities against the people who lived at Medina, the Banū Aws, the Banū Khazraj and the Jewish tribes of Medina, or against those who after the hijra came to live at Medina, the Muhājirūn from Mecca or from other places, may be placed under the heading of an internal front. His activities against the Meccans, the Jews of Khaybar and the Bedouin Arab tribes may be placed under the heading of an external front. These are as follows:

The internal front

It would appear likely that about seventy Muslims from Mecca migrated with the Prophet to Medina. He instituted brotherhood between these Muhājirūn and the Anṣār⁽¹⁾ to provide lodging and shelter to the emigrants in the families of the helpers. In this way the Prophet spread his Meccan followers all over Medina. These Muhājirūn were his potential spies on the local population which included the Anṣār, the Munāfiqūn and the Jews of Medina. It was in any case in the interests of the Muhājirūn to report to the Prophet any hostile activity or any other useful information which might come to their notice so that he could take appropriate action to secure their

1. I. Hishām, I, pp.303-5; Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Muḥabbar (Hyderabad Deccan, 1942), p.75; Abu'l-Fidā, al-Mukhtasar, ([Cairo?], 1325 A.H.), p.127.

future.

There were, moreover, devoted followers of the Prophet among the local community especially those seventy or so Medinans at whose personal invitation he had migrated to Medina.⁽¹⁾ They had to protect their invitee against any possible danger from his enemies for their honour's sake. It made them ready instruments of a comprehensive espionage system from which no Medinan Arab family was secure. Moreover, these Ansār were especially useful in that they had personal relations with the Jews of Medina and this relationship was a potential source of information from the Jewish quarter.

The external front

On this front the Prophet had various means of espionage at his disposal. These included the following:

Permanent spies:

According to some sources al-'Abbās was the Prophet's spy at Mecca who used to inform him about the activities of the Quraysh.⁽²⁾ Al-Shāfi'ī mentions that the Prophet had permitted some Meccans after their conversion to Islam to stay at Mecca and al-'Abbās was one of them.⁽³⁾ With reference to the activities of al-'Abbās before the battle of Uhud, which will

1. See below, p. 109.

2. Al-Balādhurī, Ansāb al-Ashrāf, ed. A.A. Dūrī (Beirut, 1398 A.H.), III, p.3; Istī'āb, III, p.95; Isāba, II, p.271; J. Gould, "Two Rivalries", unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Edinburgh, 1975-6), p.23.

3. Al-Shāfi'ī, Kitāb al-Umm (Būlāq, 1321-5 A.H.), IV, p.84.

be mentioned later on,⁽¹⁾ it is obvious that these people were allowed to stay at Mecca to work as the secret agents of the Prophet.

Ibn Sa'd mentions another secret agent of the Prophet at Mecca who was an ironsmith by profession. It is stated that the Prophet once advised Walīd b. al-Walīd (brother of Khālīd) to go to Mecca and to hide in the house of that ironsmith, who had become a Muslim, and to try to contact 'Ayyāsh and Salma, two Muslims who had been kept prisoners at Mecca, in order to help them to escape from their imprisonment.⁽²⁾

Wāqidī and al-Azraqī mention some other Muslims who remained at Mecca due to their inability to migrate to Medina for certain reasons but who had secret contacts with their brethren at Medina.⁽³⁾

1. See below, p.139.

2. I. Sa'd, IV, p.132.

3. Wāqidī, I, pp.72-4; al-Azraqī, Akhbār Makka (Madrid, n.d.), II, p.212. See also I. Sa'd who mentions that a person named Nu'aym al-Nahhām b. 'Abdallāh of the Banū 'Adī had accepted Islam very early but did not migrate to Medina and remained at Mecca till 6 A.H. when he migrated along with forty of his family members (IV, pp.138-9). Although it is not mentioned that he was in the secret service of the Prophet, it is likely that he was working as a spy on the Meccans for the Prophet during his stay at Mecca.

Aslam Siddīqī writes about the Muslims still at Mecca that they 'must have devised some means to pass information to the Prophet'. "Jihād, An Instrument of Islamic Revolution", Islamic Studies (1963), p.385.

Then there were the Banū Khuzā'a who lived in the suburbs of Mecca but their leader Budayl had a dār at Mecca.⁽¹⁾ It is stated that the Prophet's grandfather, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, had concluded a treaty with them to help each other which was, in the words of Goldfeld, one of his most outstanding achievements.⁽²⁾ According to Goldfeld, Ibn Hishām records this treaty according to which 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib had to support them (the Banū Khuzā'a) against anyone seeking blood revenge on sea or on land, on plain ground or on uneven ground. The Banū 'Amr (of the Banū Khuzā'a) had to support 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and his descendants against all the Arabs, in the east or west, on rugged ground or smooth ground.⁽³⁾ This agreement made the Banū Khuzā'a vehicles of intelligence and as soon as any activity of the Quraysh hostile towards the Prophet came to their notice it was reported to him without any delay.

The Prophet had appointed his secret agents in other places besides Mecca. Examples include Anas (or Unays) b. Marthad b. Abī Marthad who was his spy at Awṭās (near Ḥunayn)⁽⁴⁾

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1. Wāqidī, II, pp.783-4; al-Qalqashandī, Subḥ al-A'shā (1920; reprinted Cairo, 1383/1963), I, p.426.
 2. I. Goldfeld, "The Tribal Policy of the Prophet Muḥammad", unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Cambridge, 1970), p.69.
 3. Ibid., pp.69-70. See also Wāqidī, II, pp.781-2; Al-Zarqānī, Sharḥ al-Zarqānī 'alā al-Mawāhib (Cairo, 1325-8), II, p.289.
 4. Istī'āb, I, p.61; Isāba, I, p.73; Mḥamīdullāh, The Muslim Conduct of State (Lahore, 1977), p.146.

and Sinān b. Abī Sinān al-Asadī who was his spy among the Banū Asad and is said to have been the first person who informed the Prophet about the activities of Tulayḥa b. Khuwaylid (a false prophet).⁽¹⁾ Mūsā b. 'Uqba and Ḥamīdullāh mention another agent named al-Mundhir b. 'Amr al-Sā'idī who was in Najd and kept the Prophet informed of all that passed in those countries.⁽²⁾ Ḥusayl b. Nuwayra and his son Khārija of the Banū Ashja' seem to have been the Prophet's secret agents working in Najd. It is stated that once Khārija came to Medina and told the Prophet that the Jews of Khaybar were trying to raise an army against Medina with the help of the Banū Ghatafān⁽³⁾ and once Ḥusayl came to Medina with the news that the Banū Ghatafān were gathering at Janāb in order to attack Medina.⁽⁴⁾

New Converts

During the Medinan career of the Prophet there was a constant

1. Isāba, II, p.82.

2. Fragment of the Lost Book of Mūsā b. 'Uqba, trans.

A. Guillaume together with his translation of Ishāq's Sīrat Rasūl Allāh, as: The Life of Muhammad (Lahore, 1955), p.XLIV; Ḥamīdullāh, op. cit., p.146.

3. Wāqidī, II, pp.566-7.

4. Ṭabarī, III, p.23.

flow of new converts from all over Arabia. The battle of Badr which took place in the early period of his Medinan career provides evidence of this phenomenon. If one looks at the list of the companions of the Prophet who took part in this battle one finds some of them were those who belonged to the tribes other than the Quraysh and the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj. Wāqidī's list includes 'Āqil b. Abi'l-Bukayr of the Banū Sa'd b. Bakr, Abū Marthad and Marthad of the Banū Chanī, Mālik b. 'Amr and his two brothers Midlāj and Thiqāf of the Banū Sulaym, Suwayd b. Makhshī of the Banū Tayy, Ḥubāb of the Banū Māzin, Mas'ūd b. al-Rabī' of the Banū al-Qāra, Abu'l-Haytham, 'Ubayd, Abū Barda and Nu'mān of the Banū Balī, Mālik b. Thābit of the Banū Muzayna, 'Adī of the Banū Juhayna, 'Uṣaym of the Banū Asad and Khārija and 'Abdallāh sons of al-Ḥumayyir of the Banū Ashja'.⁽¹⁾ Such converts whose flow to Medina never ceased were a useful source of information about the activities and plans of their tribes. Moreover, it is likely that the Prophet had established sources to have access to secret information about their tribes through them.⁽²⁾

The Prophet was also receiving new converts in his ranks from Mecca as mentioned earlier. Such persons were another source of information about the activities of the Quraysh.

1. Wāqidī, I, pp.145-69.

2. The reverse is also not unlikely. See below, pp.136 f.n., 181.

Negotiators

The Prophet used negotiators to spy on the Jews of the Banū Qurayẓa when he sent Sa'd b. 'Ubāda and Sa'd Mu'adh during the siege of Medina to their quarters as will be discussed later on.⁽¹⁾

On another occasion, during the expedition of al-Hudaybiyya, the Prophet sent 'Uthmān b. 'Affān to Mecca as his envoy. 'Uthmān, while at Mecca, started visits to the Muslims detained at Mecca, as Wāqidī records,⁽²⁾ along with performing his duties as an ambassador. It seems that his secret activities came to the notice of the Meccans which caused them to detain him as is well known. It may be suggested that he was sent by the Prophet to contact those detainees with a view to obtaining an estimate of the Qurayshite power at that time.⁽³⁾

Intelligence Missions

The Prophet sent out individuals and parties on a number of occasions to procure information about the enemy whenever the need existed.⁽⁴⁾

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1. See below, p.137.
 2. Wāqidī, II, p.601.
 3. It is not farfetched because at the same time, as Wāqidī (II, p.594) records, Suhayl b. 'Amr was advising the Meccans to send him to the Prophet as their ambassador so that he could act as a spy and bring back a report on the situation in the Muslim camp.
 4. See below, pp.120, 129, 131, 140, etc.

In addition to these means of intelligence the Prophet on a number of occasions made use of traders, travellers, prisoners and traitors as a means of procuring information against his enemies as will be discussed later on.⁽¹⁾

After having a brief look at the sources of the Prophet to gather intelligence, let us now move forward. It is time to discuss, in detail, the Prophet's activities in the field of espionage during his Medinan career. As his career at Medina began with his hijra it seems appropriate to start this discussion from this very event.

The hijra

The migration of the Prophet which is known as the hijra (622 A.D.) started his Medinan career. This event changed the shape of world history because as a result a suppressed Prophet succeeded in establishing a powerful state in Arabia which soon after his death expanded enormously and conquered a considerable part of the known world. Although much has been said about the causes and the consequences of this event, the fact which made this event possible has never been illuminated in its real perspective. If one examines this event carefully one is surprised to find that intelligence played a basic role in this apparently simple event of migration from one place to another which was actually one of the most dangerous events of the Prophet's life.

1. See below, pp.134, 149, 151, 176, 177.

The hijra can be divided into two phases; the decision to migrate to Medina and the journey leading to Medina. The first phase started some two years before the hijra actually took place. Some of the sources record that some time before the hijra the Prophet sent Muṣ'ab b. 'Umayr, one of his Meccan followers, to Medina.⁽¹⁾ His ostensible duty was to instruct the Medinans in Islam but as Watt suggests he was expected to inform Muḥammad about the political situation in Medina.⁽²⁾ Margoliouth goes further when he writes,

"He (the Prophet) was of course kept constantly informed of what was going on in Yathrib, and regularly sent instructions to his agent."⁽³⁾

The sources which record the correspondence between the Prophet and Muṣ'ab appear to support these statements.⁽⁴⁾ Even a visit of Muṣ'ab to Mecca from Medina to discuss the situation of Medina with the Prophet is on record.⁽⁵⁾ This evidence makes Muṣ'ab agent in place of the intelligence

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1. 'Urwa, p.123; I. Hishām, I, p.261; I. Sa'd, III, p.118; I. Jawzī, I, p.45; al-Nuwayrī, Nihāyat al-Arab (Cairo, 1924-55), XVI, p.313.
 2. W.M.Watt, Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman (Oxford, 1978), p.83.
 3. Mohammed and the Rise of Islam (New York, 1905), p.202.
 4. I. Sa'd, III, p.118; I. Jawzī, I, p.152; Bidāya, III, p.151; Ḥamīdullāh, Majmū'a al-Wathā'iq al-Siyāsiyya (Beirut, 1969), p.35.
 5. I. Sa'd, III, p.119; I. Jawzī, I, p.152; 'Uyūn, I, p.161.

apparatus of the Prophet who conveyed the situation of Medina to the latter. In this way the Prophet became able to weigh up the whole situation in an informed way before making any decision about the hijra. As Margoliouth writes,

"As the reports of that agent's success reached him (the Prophet) he began to frame the scheme of conduct to be pursued when the invitation to Yathrib should arrive." (1)

It seems that on the basis of the reports of Muṣ'ab the Prophet had decided to migrate to Medina before he went to meet about seventy of the Medinans at al-'Aqaba (622 A.D.) (2).

Al-'Abbās is said to have accompanied the Prophet and attended the meeting where both parties reached an agreement. (3)

1. Op. cit., p.202.

2. Al-'Abbās is described in the sources as addressing the audience saying that his nephew was well protected among his clan but that he wanted to join them at Medina. He advised the Medinans to consider the matter well and count the cost and if they found themselves able to defend him, then they should give the pledge, otherwise they should drop the project. I. Hishām, I, p.266; I. Sa'd, IV, pp.7-8. This speech, however, is either a diplomatic one to give the Prophet the upper hand in the negotiations, or the part in which al-'Abbās is described as saying 'that the Prophet was well protected and secure among his clan' is a fabrication of our historians as will be discussed below. See pp.110-11.

3. I. Hishām, I, p.266; I. Sa'd, I, pp.221-3; Maqrīzī, p.35. Maqrīzī states that before the meeting started al-'Abbās

The journey to Medina was, however, not safe because at Mecca the Prophet was under the protection of Muṭ'ām b. 'Adī since his return from al-Ṭā'if about two years earlier⁽¹⁾

appointed 'Alī at one end of the 'Aqaba and Abū Bakr at the other end as spies.

1. Muṭ'ām b. 'Adī is one of the neglected figures in Islamic history in spite of the fact that his services for the Prophet are unique. Although he was and remained a non-believer he helped to bring the blockade of the Banū Hāshim to an end (some three years before the hijra) which was causing unprecedented hardships to the Banū Hāshim in general and to the Prophet in particular. I. Hishām, I, pp.228-9.

When the Prophet went to al-Ṭā'if to seek new horizons his mission proved to be a failure. When he was on his way to Mecca after a stay of approximately one month at al-Ṭā'if (Istī'āb, I, p.27) he was afraid of entering Mecca without adequate protection. He approached, through a messenger, Akhnas b. Sharīq and Suhayl b. 'Amr but they refused to take him under their protection. Then he approached Muṭ'ām b. 'Adī who agreed to give him protection. Ibn Qutayba, Kitāb 'Uyūn al-Akḥbār (Cairo, 1925), p.49; Istī'āb, I, p.231; Maqrīzī, p.28; Abū Zahra, Khātam al-Nabiyyīn (Doha, 1400 A.H.), I, p.554; Watt, Muḥammad at Mecca (Oxford, 1953), p.140. This incident indicates that the Banū Hāshim including al-'Abbās under their leader Abū Lahab were either too weak to protect their clansman or had refused to do so. That is why the Prophet had to approach

and the Medinans had promised to defend him in their

other Meccan leaders in search of protection and that the earlier mentioned part of the speech of al-'Abbās seems to be a fabrication of our historians.

Earlier, Abū Tālib had protected the Prophet but it was his duty to do so because he was the head of the clan of the Banū Hāshim. Muṭ'am, on the other hand, protected the Prophet in spite of the fact that the latter did not belong to his clan. Such a man is really praiseworthy.

'Ā'isha, wife of the Prophet, once asked her husband if he had experienced a more difficult time than that of the day of Uhud (when some seventy of his followers were killed, the remaining except a few had fled away, he himself had fallen into a ditch after receiving heavy injuries and the enemy had surrounded him for a final blow). The Prophet told her that the occasion of the failure of his mission at al-Tā'if was worse than that. Muslim, III, pp.169-70. The man who came to his rescue on this occasion was gratefully remembered by the Prophet when the latter received the first reward of his fifteen years' struggle. Some of the sources mention that the Prophet said to his companions after the battle of Badr,

"If Muṭ'am b. 'Adī had been alive and spoken to me about these filthy ones (prisoners of Badr), I would have left them for him."

Wāqidī, I, p.110; Amwāl, p.164; Irshād, VI, pp.273-4; Abū Dā'ūd, Sunan, ed.M.M.A.Ḥamīd (Cairo, 1369/1950-1370/1951), III, p.82; Istī'āb, I, p.231; Mishkāṭ, II, p.391; Uṣūl, VIII, p.205.

territory,⁽¹⁾ but between Mecca and Medina his blood could be shed with impunity. Therefore every step on a long route to Medina was very dangerous for the Prophet. It is well known that the Prophet, accompanied by his close friend Abū Bakr, left Mecca and hid in a cave called Thawr, one hour's march south of Mecca in the opposite direction from Medina, where they remained for three days. Meanwhile, the Meccans had come to know of his departure and began to search for him. They also announced a prize for anyone who could capture him and bring him back.⁽²⁾

At this point, intelligence came to the Prophet's rescue. Some of the sources record that Abū Bakr's son 'Abdallāh worked as a spy at Mecca to keep him aware of what was going on in the city. He used to spend the day at Mecca listening to the plans and the conversations of the Meccans to report to the Prophet in the cave at night.⁽³⁾ Accordingly, the Prophet

1. I. Hishām, I, p.375.

2. Mūsā b. 'Uqba, op. cit., p.XLIII; I. Hishām, I, p.294; Ṭabarī, II, p.379; I. Jawzī, I, p.49; Kāmil, II, p.81; Ḥasan, I, p.99. Glubb writes that the Meccans offered a hundred camels as a reward for his apprehension. A Bedouin family can live on a flock of twenty, so that the reward offered was sufficient to maintain five Bedouin families. Glubb, Conquests, p.56.

3. 'Urwa, p.130; I. Hisham, I, pp.291-2; I. Sa'd, III, p.173; Ṭabarī, II, p.379; I. Jawzī, I, p.49; Kāmil, II, p.81. Isāba, II, p.283; Maqrīzī, p.40; Ḥasan, I, p.99.

spent three days in the cave and the Meccans had no knowledge of his whereabouts, whereas he was fully aware of their activities. When on the fourth evening 'Abdallāh reported as Glubb writes 'that the way was clear',⁽¹⁾ the Prophet started his onward journey because according to Dermenghem 'his ('Abdallāh's) alert, subtle intelligence could be relied on'.⁽²⁾

It can be suggested that the route to Medina, first to the Red Sea coast and back up north by devious routes cutting across the main road to Medina,⁽³⁾ was chosen in the light of the intelligence reports brought by 'Abdallāh. Because of this route which took more than a week to cover and reach Qubā⁽⁴⁾ no-one could practically locate him and the hijra became a reality.

Hence we can say that it was the intelligence activities of Muṣ'ab b. 'Umayr which helped the Prophet in making his decision to migrate to Medina and it was 'Abdallāh's activities

1. A Short History of the Arab Peoples (London, 1978), p.33.

2. The Life of Mahomet, trans. Arabella Yorke (London, 1930), p.147.

3. M. Rodinson, Mohammed, trans. Anne Carter (Harmondsworth, 1971), p.145.

4. Two miles from Medina. Zakariyyā b. Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, Āthār al-Bilād (Beirut, n.d.), p.103.

which guaranteed the safety of the long journey to Medina.⁽¹⁾

The external front

Prior to Badr

As mentioned earlier, when the Prophet arrived at Medina he was soon confronted with the problem of providing a means of livelihood to his Meccan followers who migrated with him and so he thought of plundering the Meccan caravans.⁽²⁾ There was, however, another reason to adopt this tactic against the Meccans which has been discussed in detail by Donner. He writes that the coastal route to Syria from Mecca was the lifeline along which the supplies of the Meccans' staple foodstuff flowed. Therefore, the Prophet planned to cut this lifeline in order to compel the Meccans to accept his

1. There were, however, at least two more agents who worked in connection with this event: the one who worked as messenger between the Prophet and Muṣ'ab and the one who took the news to Medina as soon as the Prophet left Mecca, because the correspondence between the Prophet and Muṣ'ab has been mentioned above and we find the Medinans waiting for the Prophet at the outskirts of their town. (See I. Hishām, I, p.296; I. Khayyāt, p.13) but the sources have not recorded their names.

2. See above, p.76.

supremacy.⁽¹⁾ As it was impossible to appoint permanent parties

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1. "Mecca's Food Supplies and Muḥammad's Boycott", JESHO, XX (1977), pp.255, 263. Donner explains that the Meccans depended partly for their staple foods on the territory occupied by the Banū Ḥanīfa within Arabia. Donner, op. cit., p.254. When the Ḥanafite chief Thumāma b. Uthāl converted to Islam he told the Meccans that they could not get any foodstuff from his territory without Muḥammad's permission. Mishkāṭ, II, pp.390-1. Until now the Prophet had practically blocked the route to Syria and the Meccans had no alternative other than to plead to Muḥammad for mercy. Donner, op. cit., pp.264-5. See also Ibn Qayyim, Zād al-Ma'ād (Cairo, 1950), II, p.119. Isāba, I, p.203; Ṭabarī in his Tafsīr describes the moment of this humiliation and tells us that after the conversion of Thumāma Abū Sufyān reached Medina and asked Muḥammad why if he was rahmatan lil 'ālamīn had he killed the fathers with the sword and the sons with hunger. Ṭabarī, Taf., XVIII, p.30. Glubb says,

"The strategy (to cut the supply line) used by Muḥammad in 623-630 A.D. was the same as that used by Feisal and Lawrence in 1916-18. In the First World War, the Turks maintained large garrisons in Mecca and Medina, which depended for their maintenance not on camel caravans but on the railway from Medina to Damascus. The Amīr Feisal and T.E. Lawrence placed themselves north of Medina where they were in a position to cut this lifeline to Syria."

Glubb, Conquests, pp.60-1.

at different places for the purpose of plundering the caravans because of shortage of men and provisions the Prophet, therefore, needed information from Mecca about the exact time of departure of the caravans and their projected timetables in order to send raiding parties at specific times and places. Luckily he was in a position to obtain information from Mecca through the sources mentioned above.⁽¹⁾

On the basis of the information received from Mecca the Prophet, in the early period of his career at Medina, despatched several expeditions, some of which were led by himself, to intercept the Meccan caravans. Almost all of these expeditions failed due to the leakage of the news of the despatches through Meccan associates in Medina.⁽²⁾ To counter this problem the Prophet gave sealed instructions in the beginning of 624 A.D. to an expedition leader, 'Abdallāh b. Jahsh, with the order not to read them until after two days' journey to the east by the Najd road.⁽³⁾ When the letter was opened it contained instructions to proceed to Nakhla⁽⁴⁾ on the road from al-Ṭā'if to Mecca and there to lie in wait for a

1. See above, pp.101-3.

2. Watt, Medina, p.6.

3. See above p. 19 where this expedition is mentioned in brief.

4. A night's journey from Mecca. Bakrī, IV, p.1304.

Meccan caravan.⁽¹⁾ The party acted as directed and met a caravan at Nakhla. They put the caravan off their guard by posing as pilgrims and at a suitable opportunity they attacked the caravan and captured all the merchandise.

Thus the event, which is said to have taken place in Rajab in 2 A.H.⁽²⁾ is related by Wāqidī and as presented above it appears that the party was sent to intercept a Meccan caravan. The success of this mission shows that the Prophet received correct information about the departure of a Meccan caravan by an unusual route so far from his own territory through his espionage system. Then he managed to prevent the Meccan espionage system from discovering what he was about, first by giving 'Abdallāh sealed orders and then sending the party to the east while the goal lay south. These were his counter-intelligence measures.⁽³⁾

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1. Wāqidī, I, pp.13-14. On the basis of this story, Bell suggests that Muḥammad was able to write because,

"The secrecy with which the expedition was despatched makes it doubtful whether he would entrust anyone with the writing of the letter."

Introduction to the Qur'ān (Edinburgh, 1953), p.19.

2. "Chronology", p.247.
3. Watt, Medina, p.6. Aslam Siddīqī, op. cit., p.386; Imtiaz Ahmad, "The Significance of Sunnah and Hadīth and Their Early Documentation", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (Edinburgh, 1974), p.334. Here is another measure adopted by the Prophet to prevent the leakage of the news of his activities and it was to send instructions to the party leaders, while

Ibn Hishām,⁽¹⁾ Ṭabarī,⁽²⁾ Kindī,⁽³⁾ and Aḥmadī⁽⁴⁾ supported by Sulayman's statement quoted by Wāqidī,⁽⁵⁾ give another version of this event. According to these sources, 'Abdallāh's party was sent originally for spying against the Meccans but they indulged in fighting without prior permission of the Prophet. Although western scholars like Margoliouth,⁽⁶⁾ Tor Andrae⁽⁷⁾ and Watt⁽⁸⁾ do not agree with these sources in this matter this version is also significant for the sake of the present study. It shows that the Prophet sent out a party of spies to patrol in the territory neighbouring Mecca to procure information about the Meccans and managed to keep the mission and

they were on their way to some destination. It is stated that the Prophet wrote to Suhayl b. 'Amr, who was on his way to Mecca,

"If this letter of mine reaches you during the night, do not wait for the morning; if it arrives during the day, do not wait till evening (to carry out its orders)."

Isāba, I, p.21; Imtiaz, op. cit., p.334.

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1. I, p.366.
 2. II, p.411; Taf., II, p.195.
 3. The Apology of el-Kindī (London, 1885), p.78.
 4. 'Alī b. Husayn, Makātīb al-Rasūl (Beirut, n.d.), p.605.
 5. I, p.16.
 6. Op. cit., pp.244-45.
 7. Mohammed: the Man and his Faith, trans. T. Menzel (London, 1936), pp.197-8.
 8. Medina, p.7.

destination of the party a secret. The spies, however, do not seem to have been experienced in intelligence trade because although they posed as pilgrims to perform their duties, a suitable measure to deceive the enemy, they could not resist the temptation to plunder the caravan, setting aside their original mission.

Battle of Badr

The next important event in the field of our study is the battle of Badr which took place in Ramaḍān 2 A.H.⁽¹⁾ It is stated that the Prophet received intelligence from Mecca that a large caravan had been despatched to Syria.⁽²⁾ The Prophet tried to intercept it but failed to do so.⁽³⁾ Then he decided to attack it on its homeward journey and summoned his companions for this purpose. Abū Sufyān, the leader of the caravan, realised the danger of a possible attack and is said to have sent Ḍamḍam b. 'Amr to Mecca with a request to despatch a rescue force⁽⁴⁾ because according to I. Hishām⁽⁵⁾ he himself

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1. I. Hishām, I, pp.373, 381; I. Sa'd, II, p.19; Watt, Medina, p.12; "Chronology", p.24.
 2. Wāqidī, I, pp.13-14; I. Sa'd, II, p.10.
 3. Ibid., II, p.10
 4. I. Hishām, I, pp.369-70; Wāqidī, I, p.28; I. Sa'd, II, p.10; Ṭabarī, II, pp.421-2.
 5. I. Hishām, I, p.369.

had thirty or forty and according to Ṭabarī⁽¹⁾ seventy men to guard the caravan. Dāmḍam reached Mecca in due time and the Quraysh set out to defend their caravan with a force of 950 soldiers.⁽²⁾

The Prophet was unaware of these developments and was determined to intercept the caravan. Ten nights before leaving Medina for this purpose he sent Ṭalḥa b. 'Ubaydallāh and Sa'īd b. Zayd to reconnoitre the proposed route of the caravan which was coming back to Mecca from Syria.⁽³⁾ These spies are said to have travelled to Nakhbār, a place near the sea-shore, where they stayed with Kashad al-Juhanī, a local Bedouin, waiting for the arrival of the caravan. When it arrived they saw the whole caravan and even heard some of the caravaners asking Kashad if he had seen any of the spies of Muḥammad and Kashad answering them in the negative. When the caravan passed the spies spent the night with Kashad and the next day they started their journey back to Medina. The Prophet, in the meantime, had left for Badr and when the spies set out for Badr to meet him there he was on his way back to Medina after

1. II, p.421.

2. Wāqidī, I, p.39; Ṭabarī, II, p.423.

3. Wāqidī, I, p.19; I. Sa'd, II, pp.11-12; I. Khayyāt, p.23; Irshād, VI, p.248; Ṭabarī, II, p.478; Tanbīh, (L), p.239; Istī'āb, II, p.220; I. Jawzī, I, p.130; Maqrīzī, pp.61-2.

See also pp.35-6 above where this event has been described in brief.

the battle with the Meccan force so that they met him at Turbān⁽¹⁾ (18 miles from Medina on the road to Mecca).⁽²⁾

There were serious consequences of this delay.

Muḥammad's original plan did not include a battle with the Quraysh. He was interested only in intercepting a slow moving and ill-guarded caravan. Before the news of his attack on the caravan reached Mecca he hoped to be back in Medina distributing the booty. He might have achieved his goal without a battle if his intelligence mission had worked properly. His spies obtained the necessary information but failed to convey it to him at the proper time. The Prophet had left Medina on the 8th of Ramaḍān⁽³⁾ and the battle was fought on the 17th of this month according to Ibn Hishām⁽⁴⁾ and even later according to Wāqidī⁽⁵⁾ which means that these spies were sent out at least nineteen days before the battle took place. They are said to have reached Nakhbār in Hawrā'. Wāqidī says that a place called Dhu'l Marwa (on the route to Hawrā') was at a distance of 8 burd⁽⁶⁾ from Medina, a distance of 96 miles.⁽⁷⁾ From Dhu'l Marwa, Hawrā' was two nights' journey⁽⁸⁾ according to the

1. Wāqidī, I, pp.19-20; Ṭabarī, II, p.478.

2. Bakrī, I, p.308. Kashad was rewarded by the Prophet for his assistance in this espionage mission. Wāqidī, I, p.20.

3. I. Hishām, I, p.373.

4. Ibid., I, p.381.

5. Wāqidī, I, p.51.

6. Ibid., p.101.

7. Because a distance of twelve miles is termed burd. Lane, p.185.

8. Wāqidī, I, p.101.

same source, a distance of about 40 miles⁽¹⁾ which makes the total distance from Medina to Hawrā' about 136 miles one way and 272 miles return.

Now the journey of the hijra of the Prophet from Mecca to Medina, a distance of 200 to 300 miles,⁽²⁾ is said to have been accomplished in seven to ten days⁽³⁾ in spite of the fact that it was undertaken by a devious route which naturally had made the journey longer than it really was. It means that a journey of 272 miles could be accomplished in seven to ten days. Moreover, at a latter stage when al-'Abbās sent a messenger to the Prophet to inform him about the preparations of the Quraysh for the battle of Uhud he is said to have asked the messenger to reach Medina in three days' time.⁽⁴⁾ Although it is not mentioned that the messenger arrived in that time, it indicates the possibility of accomplishing this

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1. See Samhūdī, II, p.314 where a distance of 41 miles is described as two nights' journey.
 2. According to Gibb, op. cit., p.18, the distance between Mecca and Medina was 200 miles. According to JE this distance was 250 miles. VIII, p.422. According to Lewis this distance was 280 miles. Op. cit., p.40. But according to Ḥāfiẓ Wahba, Medina is 300 miles from Mecca, ten days' journey by camel. Jazīrat al-'Arab (Cairo, 1935) p.19.
 3. Dermenghem, op. cit., p.152; W.M.Watt, Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman (Oxford, 1978), pp.90-1; Rodinson, op.cit., p.145.
 4. Wāqidī, I, pp.203-4.

journey in three days. Perhaps this is the reason behind the statement of Joseph Hell that "Yathrib was four days' journey north of Mecca".⁽¹⁾ It means that a journey of 272 miles could be completed in four or five days' time in case of emergency. Giving the allowance of a couple of days to the spies for their stay to gather intelligence of the caravan their absence from Medina should not have exceeded seven days. But Ṭalḥa and Sa'īd failed to return even in ten days' time which spoiled Muḥammad's original plan.

Moreover, it is stated that Ṭalḥa and Sa'īd saw the caravan passing on its journey to Mecca from their hiding place at Nakhbār. It is interesting to note that a slow moving caravan reached Badr (far ahead of Medina) but these spies who were expected to be faster than the caravan could not reach Medina in the same period of time and when at last they reached Medina the caravan was apparently in the neighbourhood of Mecca.

The Prophet, however, had his own idea of the situation. According to his assessment, the caravan, at the end of the first week of Ramaḍān, was passing through the territory between Medina and Badr. He, therefore, set out towards Badr to intercept it instead of going out in the opposite direction, towards Syria, in which he had sent out Ṭalḥa and Sa'īd. When he was on his way to Badr the Prophet sent two other

1. J. Hell, The Arab Civilization, trans. S.K. Buksh
(Cambridge, 1926), p.20.

spies, the earlier mentioned 'Adī and Basbas, towards Badr in search of the news of the caravan⁽¹⁾ and he himself followed them. The activities of these spies have been mentioned earlier.⁽²⁾ Glubb writes that when the Prophet was waiting for the report of these scouts he was at a distance of some twenty-five miles north-east of Badr and Abū Sufyān and his caravan were at about the same distance north-west of Badr and were moving towards the Prophet with the intention of watering at Badr. If both parties would continue to move as they were then moving, the Prophet would have encountered the Meccan caravan at Badr the following day.⁽³⁾ But his spies deprived him of this opportunity, the details of which are as follows.

It seems that the Prophet had instructed them on their departure to come back as soon as possible. So they did not bother to see the caravans with their own eyes. Instead,

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1. 'Urwa, p.131; I. Hishām, I, p.374; Wāqidī, I, p.22; I. Sa'd, II, pp.12-13; I. Khayyāt, p.23; Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Muḥabbar (Hyderabad Deccan, 1942), p.285; Ṭabarī, II, p.433; Aghānī, IV, p.176; Istī'āb, I, pp.180-1, III, p.140; Ibn Qudāma, Istibsār, ed. A.Y. Nawīhid (n.p., 1971), p.63; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.19; Isāba, I, pp.147, 179; al-Zarqānī, op. cit., I, p.411; Iqtibās, p.168.
 2. See above, pp. 15, 29-30.
 3. Glubb, Conquests, p.62.

they came back as soon as they got wind of the caravan.⁽¹⁾ But

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1. If we compare the accounts of this mission given by I. Hishām and Wāqidī we find some differences between them regarding the time and place of the despatch of this mission and the place where they reported back to the Prophet. Before this discussion it seems appropriate to have a look at the route of the Prophet to Badr, given by I. Hishām and the distances between the places en route from Bakrī's Mu'jam which are as follows:

Medina to al-'Aqīq to Dhu'l-Ḥulayfa (6 or 7 miles from Medina. Bakrī, III, p.954) to Ūlāt al-Jaysh to Turbān (18 miles from Medina. Bakrī, I, p.308) to Malal (16 miles from Dhu'l-Ḥulayfa or about 22 miles from Medina. Bakrī, III, p.954) to Ghamīs al-Ḥamām to Sukhayrāt al-Yamān to Sayāla (7 miles from Malal or about 29 miles from Medina. Bakrī, III, p.954) then by the ravine of al-Rawḥā' (11 miles from Sayāla or about 40 miles from Medina. Bakrī, III, p.954) to Shanūka to 'Irq al-Ḍabya (according to al-Wāqidī, I, p.40, 2 miles away from al-Rawḥā') to Sajsaj to al-Munṣaraf to al-Nāziya to a wādī named Ruḥqān to al-Ṣafrā' (36 miles from al-Rawḥā' or 76 miles from Medina and 20 miles away from Badr. Bakrī, III, p.954) to Dhafirān to Aṣāfir to al-Dabba and then to Badr. I. Hishām, I, pp.374-5.

Wāqidī says that Basbas and 'Adī were sent out when the Prophet was at Buyūt al-Suqyā', a place described by himself as the suburbs of Medina, on 12th Ramaḍān. They

this mission proved to be a failure because the spies did not

went as far as Badr and reported back to the Prophet when the latter was at 'Irq al-Ẓabya where he was on 14th of Ramaḍān. Wāqidī, I, pp.40, 46. It means that these spies covered about 95 miles distance to reach Badr and then 58 miles from Badr to 'Irq al-Ẓabya, a total of 153 miles in two days. It seems a difficult task for seventh century Arab spies who had only camels at their disposal because there were only two horses with the Prophet's army during this expedition (see Wāqidī, I, p.27; Ibn Qayyim, op. cit., II, p.85; Kanz, X, p.266) and those certainly were not at the disposal of these spies. Therefore, it is hard to believe the account of Wāqidī in this regard.

I. Hishām (I, p.374) says that these spies were sent out when the Prophet was near al-Ṣafrā' and he does not mention the place where they reported back. If the Prophet had been waiting for them at al-Ṣafrā' it means that they had to accomplish only 40 miles to and from Badr, a distance which may have taken only two nights or even less than that.

This comparison shows that although Wāqidī's account is not impossible in view of the advice of al-'Abbās to his messenger, mentioned earlier, I. Hishām's account seems more plausible.

care to remove the signs of their visit to that particular hill. Abū Sufyān benefitted from their mistake. It is stated that when he went forward to be in the front of the caravan as a precautionary measure and came to the watering place he asked Majdī if he had noticed anything strange. Majdī replied that he had seen nothing of that sort except two riders who stopped on the hill and took water away in a skin. Then Abū Sufyān came to the spot where the riders had halted. He picked up some camel dung and broke it into pieces and found that it contained date stones. 'By God', he said, 'This is the fodder of Yathrib and those riders were certainly Muḥammad's spies. I am sure that Muḥammad and his companions are very near.' He then returned to his caravan and changed its direction from the road to the sea-shore leaving Badr on the left.⁽¹⁾ If 'Adī and Basbas had removed the traces of their visit from the place then Abū Sufyān could have been kept in the dark and the Prophet would have been able to attack the caravan successfully with the help of the information achieved by these spies.

By the help of his watchfulness Abū Sufyān had a narrow escape. When he felt himself out of danger he sent a message to the advancing Meccan force to return to Mecca. Abū Jahl, one of the leaders of the force, refused to go back and

1. 'Urwa, p.132; I. Hishām, I, p.377; Wāqidī, I, p.41;
I. Sa'd, II, p.13; Tabarī, II, pp.437-8; Aghānī, IV, p.181;
I. Khaldūn II(2), p.20.

insisted on going up to Badr to make a show of strength.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet who appears to have been at al-Ṣafrā' (20 miles from Badr) at this time was still unaware of the advancing Meccan force and was looking for an opportunity to plunder the caravan. When he moved forward and reached Dhafirān he learnt that the Meccan force had come out to rescue their caravan. The Prophet, then, consulted about the new situation with his companions,⁽²⁾ proceeded onwards and stopped near Badr.

Because of the failure of the previous missions in the intelligence game and because there was no more time left to examine the capabilities of anyone else, Muḥammad himself accompanied by one of his companions set out on a spying mission. He met an old Bedouin named Sufyān al-Ḍamrī who did not know who he was. He, the Prophet, inquired about the Quraysh as well as Muḥammad and his companions. The old man said, "I won't tell you until you tell me to which party you belong." The Prophet said, "If you tell us we will tell you." The old man said, "Tit for tat?" "Yes" the Prophet replied. The old man said, "I have heard that Muḥammad and his companions went out on such-and-such a day. If this is true, today they are in such-and-such a place" referring to the place in which the Prophet's companions actually were, "and I have heard that the Quraysh went out on such-and-such a day,

1. I. Sa'd, II, p.13; Ṭabarī, II, p.438.

2. I. Hishām, I, pp.374-5; Wāqidī, I, pp.48-9; I. Sa'd, II, p.14; Ṭabarī, II, p.434; Aghānī, IV, p.177.

and if this is true, today they are in such-and-such a place', meaning the one in which they actually were." When he had finished he said, "Of whom are you?" The Prophet said, "We are from mā'." Then he left him while the old man was saying, "What does from mā' mean? Is it from the water of 'Irāq?" (1) In this way the Prophet received exact information about the projected route of the Meccan force without disclosing his own identity.

Then the Prophet returned to his camp and at night he sent another party composed of 'Alī, Zubayr, Sa'd b. Abī Waqqās and Basbas towards the well of Badr in search of news, as mentioned earlier. (2) The party came across the water carriers of the Quraysh and captured two of them whom they brought to the camp for interrogation. The captives told the interrogators that they belonged to the Meccan force, an answer to which they did not want to listen because they were still hoping to plunder the caravan, so they beat them. After having harsh

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1. I. Hishām, I, pp.375-6; Wāqidī, I, p.50; Ṭabarī, II, pp.435-6; Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyūn al-Akhbār (Cairo, 1925), p.194; Maqrīzī, p.76. Al-Ibshihī tells us that the Prophet had referred to these Qur'ānic verses,

"Let a man consider, therefore, of what he is created. He is created of seed poured forth (ماء رائق) issuing from the loins, and the breast bones." LXXXVI:5-7

- (G. Sale, The Koran (London, n.d.), p.577). Al-Mustatraf (Cairo, n.d.), I, p.62.
2. See above, p. 37.

punishment, the captives said, "Yes, we belong to Abū Sufyān". At this moment the Prophet appeared on the scene and cross-questioned the captives. He realised that they were speaking the truth when they said that they belonged to the Meccan force. He then asked them about the Meccan numbers but they did not know. Then he asked them how many animals they slaughtered every day and when they said nine or ten, the Prophet concluded that the Meccans were between nine hundred and a thousand. Then he asked how many nobles of the Quraysh were with the force and the captives named some of them. On further interrogation they disclosed the location of the Meccan army and announced that they were beyond the farthest hill which could be seen in the distance which meant that they were several miles away.⁽¹⁾

This mission was partly a failure and partly a success. The spying party had let some of the water carriers go back to the Quraysh who told them about the presence of the Prophet nearby and it was the first news which the Quraysh received about the Prophet.⁽²⁾ The party should either have not attacked the water carriers or they should have captured all of them to prevent them from taking the news to the Quraysh.

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1. I. Hishām, I, p.376; Wāqidī, I, pp.51-3; I. Sa'd, II, p.15; Musnad, II, p.193; Muslim, III, p.159; Ṭabarī, II, pp.422, 436-7; Aghānī, IV, pp.179-181; Ibn Qayyim, op. cit., II, p.86; Maqrīzī, p.77; Haykal, p.221; Iqtibās, p.168.
 2. Wāqidī, I, p.51.

If they had acted wisely the Prophet would have been in a position to attack the Meccan force by surprise and could have achieved the booty without any losses which he later suffered in the battle. The bright side of this mission is that the Prophet managed to obtain definite news about the strength and the location of the enemy before they had much news about him because the water carriers, who had managed to escape, could have told the Meccans only about his presence nearby without giving any hint of the exact location and the strength. This situation gave the Prophet a tactical advantage.

The Prophet, however, was not satisfied with the information achieved through this interrogation. He may have feared that the captives had not told him everything truthfully for fear of further punishment. He, therefore, sent 'Ammār b. Yāsar and Ibn Mas'ūd towards the enemy in search of news. They took a round of the enemy camp by night and came back with the report that the enemy was so frightened and alarmed that if a horse neighed he was punished and constant rain had increased their miseries.⁽¹⁾

When the Prophet became sure that the enemy was nearby and a combat with them was not far away, he adopted the strategy suggested by al-Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir to move to the water nearest to the enemy, build a cistern and block all the wells beyond it so that his force would have plenty of water

1. Wāqidī, I, p.54.

and the enemy would have nothing to drink.⁽¹⁾ This strategy worked and the next morning when the enemy crossed the hill, they found themselves confronted with the Prophet's force who had left nothing for them to drink. The desert soon dried their throats and they started to struggle for even drops of water.⁽²⁾ For how long could such a force fight? The result of the battle lies in the answer to this question. As the details of the battle of Badr are well known and are not within the scope of this study, we move on therefore to some concluding remarks.

In the sequence of events which culminated in the battle of Badr, Muḥammad seems therefore to have been well aware of the importance of intelligence. He knew that with the help of intelligence certain goals could be reached without resorting to war and without much cost. On the other hand,

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1. I. Hishām, I, p.378; Wāqidī, I, p.53; Aghānī, IV, pp.183-4; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.20; Maqrīzī, pp.77-8; Abū Zahra, Khātam al-Nabiyyīn, (Doha, Qatar, 1400 A.H.), II, p.82. To procure such information is a part of intelligence work. See EB, XII, p.347 where geographic intelligence is discussed in these words,

"Geographic intelligence, the comprehensive term for land, sea and air data required for military plans and operations, includes several sub divisions of major importance, such as topographic, hydrographic, weather and meteorological intelligence."

2. I. Hishām, I, p.379; Wāqidī, I, p.61; al-Zarqānī, op. cit., pp.414-5.

most of the spies sent out by him did not perform their task satisfactorily. Had the first two missions worked properly Muhammad might have captured the whole caravan. At a later stage, had the third mission worked properly he might have taken the Meccan force by surprise and captured the booty without the losses which he suffered in the battle. In the subsequent outcome of the unsuccessful attempts of the first two missions Muhammad did not rely solely on his agents, but he himself acted as a spy. Moreover he was not content with an interrogation of the captives made by his companions but he himself took part in it and managed to obtain accurate information about his enemy which he verified by another mission. Then he adopted a strategy which determined the result of the battle before it actually started.

Between Badr and Uhud

For the Quraysh the result of the battle of Badr was to 'say farewell to the streams of Damascus' as the Prophet's court poet described 'because the road that way was barred'.⁽¹⁾ As the water fetched from those streams was shared by the Bedouin

1. Ḥassān, Dīwān, ed. H. Hirschfeld (Leyden, 1910), p.19;

I. Hishām, II, p.58. Moreover Hassan told the Meccans that,

"If they take the road to the valley over the back of the sand dunes (as an alternative route), then tell them: 'There is no road that way.'"

ذروا فلجأت الشام قد حال دونها ضراب كافوا المخابض الأوارك
اذ احبطت حوران من رمل عالج فقولوا لهاليس الطريق هنا لك

Arab tribes en route⁽¹⁾ because of the arrangement called īlāf, mentioned earlier,⁽²⁾ the blockade of the route to Syria meant economic disaster for these tribes too. To avert this disaster they decided to strike against Medina immediately after the battle of Badr and the Banū Sulaym and the Banū Ghaṭafān took the lead. A hostile gathering of theirs at al-Kudr⁽³⁾ was reported to the Prophet who set out to disperse it.⁽⁴⁾ When he reached the spot he found it deserted but came across a man named Yasār who told him that the enemy had gone to higher places. The Prophet, therefore, returned to Medina after a short stay without fighting.⁽⁵⁾

1. M.A. Sha'bān, Islamic History (Cambridge, 1971), I, p.8.

2. See above pp.49-51. Belyaev, however, states that the Bedouin Arab tribes benefitted from the Meccan trade in another way too when he says that,

"The camels, their drivers and the hands for loading were recruited amongst the Bedouins of the neighbourhood."

Arabs, Islam and the Arab Caliphate, trans. A. Courevitch (London, 1969), p.89.

3. About 8 burds distance from Medina near a mine of the Banū Sulaym. Tanbih (L), p.243.

4. According to I. Hishām, II, p.54. this expedition took place in Shawwāl 2 A.H. and according to Wāqidī, I, p.182 it took place in al-Muharram 3 A.H. See also "Chronology", p.222 where the latter date is accepted as correct.

5. I. Hishām, II, p.54; Wāqidī, I, pp.182-3; I. Sa'd, II, p.31; Tabarī, II, p.482; Maqrīzī, p.107.

It was not very long before another gathering with aggressive designs, this time the Banū Tha'laba and the Banū Maḥārīb, both branches of the Banū Ghaṭafān, was reported to the Prophet at Dhū Amarr⁽¹⁾ in Najd. The Prophet set out to disperse it before the enemy could start its march to attack Medina. While on his way the Prophet met an enemy tribesman named Jabbār who warned him that should the enemy hear of his advance they would run away. The Prophet is said to have kept on marching but the enemy soon heard of his approach and retreated to the mountains. The Prophet then returned to Medina after a short stay at Dhū Amarr without fighting.⁽²⁾

After a short stay at Medina the Prophet once again set out to break up a hostile gathering of the Banū Sulaym which was reported to have taken place at Baḥrān, a place near the previously mentioned mine of the Banū Sulaym.⁽³⁾ When the Prophet reached Layla, a day's distance from Baḥrān, he met a tribesman of the Banū Sulaym who told him on questioning that the enemy had disappeared. The Prophet, however, reached Baḥrān and then returned to Medina without fighting.⁽⁴⁾

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1. Three stations distance from Medina. Samḥūdī, II, p.249.
 2. I. Hishām, II, pp.55-6; Wāqidī, I, pp.193-5; I. Sa'd, II, pp.34-5; Ṭabarī, II, p.487; Isāba, I, p.220; Maqrīzī, pp.110-1. According to I. Hishām, II, p.56, this expedition took place in Ṣafar 3 A.H. and according to Wāqidī, I, p.193, it took place in Rabī' al-Awwal 3 A.H.
 3. Tanbīh, (L), p.244.
 4. I. Hishām, II, p.56; Wāqidī, I, pp.196-7. According to Wāqidī this expedition took place in Jamada'l-Ūlā 3 A.H., but according to I. Hishām it took place a month earlier in Rabī' al-Ākhir.

These three expeditions are alike in their nature. The Prophet received information, set out to disperse the gathering, met an enemy tribesman to answer his questions and returned to Medina without fighting because the enemy had disappeared into the mountains. By a minute examination of these events one of two assumptions may be made. Firstly, there was no gathering of the enemy at all. The Prophet by his own calculations had concluded that such-and-such tribes might think of invading Medina because of the danger posed to their economy by the blockade of the caravan route to Syria. So he thought it proper to frighten the enemy by a show of strength instead of waiting for a possible attack on Medina.

Alternatively it is possible that an actual gathering of the enemy did take place. In such a situation the intelligence system of the Prophet against the tribes of Najd must have been very effective because he received the news of the preparations of the above mentioned Bedouin tribes so early that he was able to go out to attack before the enemy could start their march towards Medina. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the enemy had its own sources of information on the activities of the Prophet and as soon as the above tribes heard of his march against them they disappeared.⁽¹⁾

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1. Although it is not specifically mentioned in the context of these events, Wāqidī and I. Sa'd record that in 7 A.H. when the Prophet sent an expedition against the Banū Sulaym there was a spy of this tribe among the raiding party. The spy deserted the party as soon as it left Medina

As for the Quraysh during this period, they made a raid on the outskirts of Medina some ten weeks after the battle of Badr in Dhu'l-Hijja 2 A.H. (624 A.D.) under the command of Abū Sufyān. His control of news must have been very effective because he reached the suburbs of Medina, met Sallām b. Mishkam, a leader of a Jewish tribe, the Banū al-Nadīr, who fed him with the secret information about the Muslims, attacked the outskirts of Medina and the Prophet only came to know about this raid when he, Abū Sufyān, was on his way back to Mecca.⁽¹⁾

But in spite of this successful attempt to boost the morale of the Meccans, no one among them was prepared to send a caravan to Syria by the coastal route for fear of plundering by the Prophet. At the same time they were worried about their trade which needed speedy measures to avert disaster.

and took the news of the forthcoming raid to the Banū Sulaym. Wāqidī, II, p.741; I. Sa'd, II, p.123.

1. I. Hishām, II, pp.54-5; Wāqidī, I, pp.181-2; I. Sa'd, II, p.30; Ṭabarī, II, pp.483-5; JE, VIII, p.423; "Chronology", p.261. Aslam Ṣiddīqī comments on this raid of Abū Sufyān in these words,

"Abū Sufyān took such measures that the efficient intelligence service, which the Prophet had at the time of the Nakhla raid completely broke down. He could also gather intelligence about the Muslims from inside Medina. He established contacts with the Jewish chief whom he could describe as an 'ally' and also promised him 'booty'. All this happened right in Medina, the Prophet's city. Something had obviously gone wrong."

op. cit., p.390.

Luckily they found a man, Furāt b. Ḥayyān, who knew another route to Syria, which passed through 'Irāq. Therefore, they sent a caravan under his guidance. The news of the despatch of this caravan reached the Prophet through Nu'aym b. Mas'ūd of the Banū Ashja'. He was at Mecca at the time of the departure of the caravan. Then he came to Medina to visit his Jewish friends. He disclosed this news whilst drunk at a party held in the house of a Jew named Kināna b. Abi'l-Ḥuqayq. Another participant of the party was a Muslim, Sulayṭ b. Aslam by name, who took the news to the Prophet. Zayd was sent out immediately to attack the caravan who fell suddenly on the caravan and captured the whole merchandise.⁽¹⁾

This expedition is remarkable for its intelligence aspects. The Quraysh must have tried to keep the news of the despatch of their caravan a secret from their enemies but Nu'aym was their friend, he belonged to the Banū Ashja' of the Banū Ghatafān who were allied to them, so he shared this secret. But he could not keep his mouth shut whilst drunk at Medina. Sulayṭ, who used to attend such parties⁽²⁾ happened to be present in Kināna's house. The latter did not suspect him of being a spy of Muḥammad but he might have been attending such parties on Muḥammad's advice to keep him informed of what was going on in Jewish quarters. In this way, Muḥammad succeeded in obtaining information about the caravan. He then

1. Wāqidī, I, pp.197-8; Maqrīzī, p.112.

2. Wāqidī, I, p.198.

managed to keep Zayd's expedition a secret so that none of his enemy's agents could tell the Quraysh to protect their caravan.

Battle of Uhud

The coastal route to Syria had already become dangerous for the Quraysh and the attack of Zayd on their caravan despatched by the eastern route, a route about which they had thought the Prophet and his companions knew nothing,⁽¹⁾ brought their trade to a standstill. Therefore they decided on an all-out attack on Medina to put an end to Muḥammad and his companions once and for all. After large scale preparations they set out towards Medina with an army of 3,000 men including two hundred cavalry.

The Prophet received the news of their march through different sources. First of all, al-‘Abbās wrote a letter to the Prophet containing the news of the march. It enclosed detailed information about the equipment and number of the soldiers. He gave this letter to a man from the Banū Ghifār and asked him to deliver it to the Prophet in three days. The messenger reached Medina and found that the Prophet was at Qubā. He proceeded there and delivered the letter to the Prophet. Ubayy b. Ka‘b read the letter for him and was advised to keep the contents secret. Then the Prophet went to the house of Sa‘d b. al-Rabī‘ and discussed the matter in secrecy but the latter's wife overheard the discussion and the matter

1. Wāqidī, I, p.198.

could no longer remain secret.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet also received intelligence about the march of the Meccan army through 'Amr b. Sālim of the Banū Khuzā'a. He left Mecca and passed by the Quraysh when they were at Dhū Tuwā, a valley in the suburbs of Mecca, and he then reached Medina. He told the Prophet about the invading Meccan force. On his return journey he found the Quraysh at Baṭn Rābiḡ, some nights' distance from Medina. Abū Sufyān felt sure that he was coming from Medina after informing the Prophet about their march which spoiled the chance of a surprise attack on Medina.⁽²⁾

To verify the information received through the above sources the Prophet sent out two spies named Anas and Mūnis, sons of Faḍāla, in the direction of Mecca. They found the Meccan army in the valley of al-'Aqīq⁽³⁾ and reconnoitred their

1. Wāqidī, I, pp.203-4; I. Sa'd, II, p.37; al-Balādhurī, Ansāb, ed. A.A. Dūrī (Beirut, 1398 A.H.), III, p.3; Maqrīzī, p.114; al-Zarqānī, op. cit., II, p.21; M. Ḥamīdullāh, Wathā'iq (Beirut, 1969), p.50; Haykal, pp.254-5; Ḥasan, I, p.111; Iqtibās, p.168.

2. Wāqidī, I, p.205; Maqrīzī, p.114.

3. According to Samhūdī, II, p.189, two valleys were called al-'Aqīq, one near Medina and the other in the territory of the Banū Muzayna. He mentions different views on the distance from Medina which is given as either 2, 3, 6 or 7 miles from Medina.

movements. When the army reached the suburbs of Medina they returned to the Prophet and told him what they had seen.⁽¹⁾

In the meantime the Prophet received information about the numbers and the equipment of the enemy force through Aws b. Hajar al-Aslamī who sent his slave Mas'ūd from 'Araj, 78 miles from Medina,⁽²⁾ to the Prophet with the news.⁽³⁾

Then the Prophet sent another spy, perhaps to verify the estimates of the strength of the enemy received through some of the previous sources, and advised him to keep his information secret upon his return. This spy was al-Ḥubāb b. al-Mundhir who managed to enter the enemy camp and found out that there were nearly 3,000 soldiers and about 200 horses. He also found out that the Quraysh had brought some of their women with them who were singing songs of vengeance. Al-Ḥubāb came back and reported to the Prophet.⁽⁴⁾

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1. Wāqidī, I, pp.206-7; I. Sa'd, II, p.37; Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Muḥabbar (Hyderabad Deccan, 1361 A.H.), p.286; Isāba, I, pp.70-1; Maqrīzī, p.115.
 2. Samhūdī, II, p.343.
 3. I. Sa'd, IV, p.310.

It is stated that when the Prophet was on his way to Medina from Mecca during the hijra the above mentioned Aws met the Prophet when the latter was in his territory. He is also said to have sent his above mentioned slave, Mas'ūd, with the Prophet as a guide and escort during the rest of his journey to Medina. Isāba, I, p.86; I. Sa'd, IV, p.311.

4. Wāqidī, I, pp.207-8; I. Sa'd, II, p.37; Maqrīzī, p.115.

When considering all these activities before the battle of Uhud, it is clear that the intelligence methods of the Prophet were working very satisfactorily. Al-'Abbās and 'Amr b. Sālim informed him about the forthcoming attack. Aws b. Hajar also informed him about the Meccan army when it was on the final stages of its journey. As the intelligence brought by the secret agents had to be verified by other sources, the Prophet sent Anas, Mūnis and al-Ḥubāb for this purpose who worked quite satisfactorily. In this way the espionage system of the Prophet ruled out the possibility of a surprise attack on Medina on the one hand, which might have been disastrous for the Prophet and on the other it provided an opportunity to think about the best possible way to fight the enemy. He availed himself of this opportunity and discussed the matter with his advisors. Some of them, headed by Ibn Ubayy, advised him to remain in the city and fight the enemy from within because if the enemy entered the city, people would fight and women and children would throw stones on them from the walls.⁽¹⁾ Some of them, however, headed by Ḥamza advised him to go out of the city to fight the Meccans because to remain in the city was cowardice.⁽²⁾ Passions overcame wisdom and the battle was

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1. I. Hishām, II, p.66; Wāqidī, I, pp.209-10; Ṭabarī, Taf., IV, p.44; Ibn Qayyim, op. cit., II, p.91; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.24; al-Zarqānī, op. cit., II, p.22; Haykal, p.256; Ḥasan, I, p.111.
 2. Wāqidī, I, pp.210-11; Maqrīzī, p.116; al-Zarqānī, op. cit., II, p.23.

fought at the foot of mount Uhud, at a three miles' distance from Medina,⁽¹⁾ in Shawwāl 3 A.H.⁽²⁾ (625 A.D.), which resulted in a victory of the Quraysh. The Meccans, however, did not follow up their success by invading defenceless Medina and left the battlefield on their homeward journey.

From the battlefield the Prophet sent 'Alī to follow the footsteps of the enemy to see whether they were riding their camels and leading their horses or riding the horses and leading the camels. In the former situation he deduced that they must be going to Mecca but the latter case meant an advance on Medina. 'Alī went out on his mission until he saw the Meccans who were riding their camels and leading their horses. He then came back to the Prophet with this news.⁽³⁾ The Prophet then sent Sulayṭ and Nu'mān, sons of Sufyān b. Khālīd, to keep watch on the further movements of the enemy. These spies never returned because they fell into the hands of the enemy at Ḥamrā al-Asad and were killed.⁽⁴⁾ The Prophet,

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1. Samhūdī, II, p.109. According to Dabbāgh, Uhud is a mountain 7 kilometres north of Medina, 1,200 metres above sea level. Jazīrat al-'Arab (Beirut, 1963), I, p.108.
 2. "Chronology", p.265.
 3. I. Hishām, II, p.86; Ṭabarī, II, pp.527-8; Ibn Qayyim, op. cit., II, p.108. According to Maqrīzī, p.159, it was Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ who was sent out instead of 'Alī.
 4. Wāqidī, I, p.337; I. Sa'd, II, p.49; Maqrīzī, p.168. Ḥamarā al-Asad is 8 miles from Medina. Bakrī, II, p.468; Samhūdī, II, p.295.

however, returned to Medina quite relieved and unaware of the fate of these spies.

In the night of the same day 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr al-Māzinī came to see the Prophet at Medina and told him that he had seen the Quraysh at Malal.⁽¹⁾ He had entered their camp and found that they were thinking about invading Medina.⁽²⁾ This information changed the situation and the Prophet discussed it with Abū Bakr and 'Umar who advised him to pursue the enemy and he decided to do so.⁽³⁾ He then summoned his companions to pursue the enemy and reached Ḥamrā al-Asad where Ma'bad b. Abī Ma'bad of the Banū Khuzā'a met him and perhaps at his instigation went towards Mecca. At al-Rawḥā,⁽⁴⁾ he met the Quraysh and told them that Muḥammad was coming to fight them with an unprecedentedly large force and all those Medinans who did not join him in Uhūd were now with him. He gave such a terrifying account of the Prophet's force that Abū Sufyān set out for Mecca in a great hurry. Ma'bad, then, sent another Khuzā'ī to Ḥamrā al-Asad to tell the Prophet what had happened. On receiving this information the Prophet came

1. This place is 23 miles from Medina. Bakrī, III, p.954.

2. Wāqidī, I, p.326.

3. Ibid., I, pp.326-7.

4. A place 41 miles away from Medina. Bakrī, III, p.954.

Samhūdī, II, p.314, says that according to Muslim this place is 36 miles from Medina, according to Ibn Shayba it is 30 miles from Medina, according to Abū Ghassān a place called Warqān in al-Rawḥā, is at a distance of 4 burds from

back to Medina⁽¹⁾ very relieved.

As to the intelligence aspects of this event it has been mentioned earlier that the intelligence machinery of the Prophet worked well and saved the Prophet from a surprise attack.⁽²⁾ The result of the battle, however, was dictated by passions rather than wisdom but intelligence once more came to the rescue of the Prophet and saved him from total defeat. Ma'bad, a secret agent of the Prophet, spread information among the Meccans that the Prophet was pursuing them with an unprecedentedly large force. This kind of propaganda is, after all, a part of intelligence work.

Between Uhud and al-Khandiq

The next event in the Prophet's Medinan career connected with espionage is the expedition to Qaṭan, an account of which is as follows.

Wāqidī states that a woman named Zaynab of the Banū Tayy was married to Ṭulayb b. 'Umayr, a companion of the Prophet, and lived at Medina. One of her relatives, named Walīd b.

Medina and according to al-Asadī the distance between al-Rawḥā' and Medina is 35 or 36 or 42 miles.

1. I. Hishām, II, pp.90-1; Wāqidī, I, pp.338-40; I. Khayyāt, p.39; Ṭabarī, II, pp.535-6; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.27; Maqrīzī, p.169; Haykal, p.269; Gould, op. cit., p.104.
2. See above, p. 142.

Zuhayr, came to see her and told her husband that while on his way to Medina he saw a gathering of the Banū Asad with aggressive designs against Medina. The news consequently reached the Prophet who sent Abū Salma to break up the gathering which had taken place at Qaṭan⁽¹⁾ and sent Walīd with him as a guide. They travelled day and night, came near to Qaṭan and took the enemy by surprise who ran away leaving large quantities of booty for the invaders. This event is said to have taken place in al-Muḥarram 4 A.H.⁽²⁾ about two months after the battle of Uhud.⁽³⁾

As to the intelligence aspects of this event it may be stated that, as mentioned earlier, one of the sources of information of the pre-Islamic Arabs about their enemy was their matrimonial relationships and the Prophet made use of this source during the present event. Moreover, he planned and despatched the expedition so secretly that no enemy agent could get wind of it and consequently the raiding party took the enemy by complete surprise.

After this successful intelligence operation

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1. The name of a mountain in Najd near another mountain called Fayd which belonged to the Banū Tayy. Tanbih (L), p.245.
 2. "Chronology", pp.265-7, 268.
 3. Wāqidī, I, pp.340-4.

came the earlier mentioned⁽¹⁾ event which happened at al-Rajī'.⁽²⁾ In Ṣafar 4 A.H. (625 A.D.)⁽³⁾ some seven of the Prophet's companions were overpowered by the Banū Liḥyān, a branch of the Banū Hudhayl. According to the common interpretation⁽⁴⁾ of the purpose of this expedition, these men were sent out to instruct 'Aḍal and al-Qāra, branches of the Banū Khuzayma, so that they should embrace Islam. When these instructors reached al-Rajī' they were treacherously overpowered by the Banū Liḥyān and all were murdered except two who were taken prisoners and then sold to the Meccans and were killed later on.

There is, however, another version⁽⁵⁾ of this event,

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1. See above, pp.20, 30.
 2. Name of a watering place near Had'a between Mecca and 'Usfān. Wāqidī, I, p.355; Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyūn al-Akḥbār (Cairo, 1925), II, p.40; Bakrī, II, p.641. According to Bidāya, IV, p.62 and Ḥasan, II, p.345 al-Rajī' is 8 miles from 'Usfān towards Mecca while according to Samḥūdī, II, p.345 'Usfān is two days' journey from Mecca.
 3. Wāqidī, I, p.354. According to I. Hishām, II, p.130, this event took place a bit earlier in 3 A.H.
 4. I. Hishām, II, p.130; Wāqidī, I, pp.354-62; I. Khayyāt, p.39; Ṭabarī, II, pp.538-42.
 5. 'Urwa, p.175; Wāqidī, I, p.354; Musnad, XV, pp.57-9; Irshād, VI, p.312; Abū Dā'ūd, op. cit., III, p.69.

according to which these people were sent out towards Mecca as spies to get information about the activities of the Quraysh. When they reached Had'a they stopped for a while to have their meal and then resumed their journey. Accidentally some of the Banū Liḥyān passed that way and saw the date-stones left by these spies. They examined these date-stones and concluded that these were the dates of Yathrib and that some travellers who belonged to, or had come from, Yathrib had stopped there. Because the relations between the Banū Liḥyān and the Prophet were bad the Banū Liḥyān followed the footsteps and met the Yathribites at al-Rajī' and overpowered them because the latter had refused to surrender.⁽¹⁾ Muir⁽²⁾ seems to agree with this version as it is but Watt goes further and suggests the possibility of these men being the spies for Muḥammad and instructors for the Arab tribes⁽³⁾ which makes them spies in the garments of missionaries. Watt's suggestion does not seem far-fetched because we have already seen Muṣ'ab working as the secret agent of the Prophet as well as a religious instructor in Medina before the hijra.

The spies, however, do not seem to have been experienced in the intelligence trade because of the fact that they did not erase the traces of their visit to Had'a, a mistake made by

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1. 'Uyūn, II, p.40; Ibn Qudāma, al-Istibṣār, ed. A.Y. Nawīhiḍ (n.p., 1971), pp.305-6.
 2. W.Muir, The Life of Mohammad (Edinburgh, 1912), p. 277.
 3. Watt, Medina, p.33.

'Adī and Basbas before the battle of Badr, and the enemy realised from the dates that the men were from Yathrib. This mistake proved to be fatal because they were practically in the lion's den.

The next event of the Prophet's life in the field of intelligence was his raid on Dhāt al-Riqā' in Najd. News of the gathering of the Banū Tha'laba and the Banū Anmār of the Banū Ghatafān hostile towards Medina came to the Prophet through a trader. The Prophet is said to have set out to disperse the gathering but the enemy ran away as soon as they heard the news of his approach leaving large quantities of booty.⁽¹⁾

Another gathering of the unmentioned Arab tribesmen was reported to the Prophet which had taken place at Dūmat al-Jandal.⁽²⁾ It was also reported that these tribesmen were plundering the travellers and thinking of a raid on Medina. The Prophet set out to disperse the gathering and took a

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1. Wāqidī, I, pp.395-6; I. Sa'd, II, p.61. Ibn Hishām, II, p.150 says that this event took place in Jamādā 'l-Ūlā 4 A.H. and Wāqidī says that it took place in al-Muharram 5 A.H. Jones, however, does not agree with both the sources and states that this event might have taken place at any time between 2 A.H. and 7 A.H. "Chronology", pp.270-1.
 2. A place at a 13 or 15 nights' distance from Medina and 5 nights' journey short of Damascus. I. Sa'd, II, p.62; Tanbih (L), p.248, according to Samhūdī, II, p.270 Dūma is 13 stations' journey from Medina and according to Bakrī, II, p.565 Dūma is the 10th station from Medina, the 10th from Kūfa, the 8th from Damascus and the 12th from Egypt.

tribesman of the Banū 'Udhra with him as a guide. When the Prophet reached the vicinity of Dūma, the guide, whose name was Madhkūr, advised the Prophet to discontinue his march and to let him go forward to spy out the whereabouts of the enemy. The Prophet agreed and Madhkūr set out as mentioned earlier.⁽¹⁾ On the basis of his information the Prophet attacked the herds and captured them. Then he sent out parties of soldiers to search for the enemy but could not find anyone except one person who told him that the enemy gathering was dispersed as soon as they heard of his attack on their herds. The Prophet, then, returned to Medina laden with booty.⁽²⁾

As to the intelligence aspects of these two events, we have to say that the Prophet made use of a source of information, traders, in the case of the first event, which had also been available to the pre-Islamic Arabs. He could not, however, keep his expedition secret which implies that the enemy had either their agents at Medina or on the outskirts of their own tribal territory. In the case of the second event the Prophet once again seems to have received information through traders (or travellers) because at this stage of his career it seems

1. See above, p.15.

2. Wāqidī, I, pp.402-4; I. Sa'd, II, pp.62-3.

According to Wāqidī, I, p.402 and I. Hishām, II, p.155, this event took place in Rabī' al-Awwal 5 A.H. but Jones says that it might have taken place at any time during the first seven months of the year 5 A.H. "Chronology", p.271.

unlikely that he had his own agents at Dūma, a place far from Medina. During the journey to Dūma, although the Prophet sought help from espionage, he could not surprise the enemy, probably because inadequate counter-intelligence measures.

After these events let us have a look at a very successful intelligence operation which is known as the expedition of the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq.

It is stated that some travellers who had come from the territory around Mecca brought the news to Medina that a gathering of the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq⁽¹⁾ was taking place at al-Muraysī⁽²⁾ with aggressive designs against Medina. The Prophet, alarmed by the news, directed Burayda b. al-Ḥuṣayb al-Aslamī, one of his companions, to go there and make inquiries to ascertain the truth of this report and permitted him to say what he would think appropriate to fulfil his mission. Burayda is said to have reached the spot and met the enemy whom he informed of the fact that he along with his tribe was interested

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1. The Banū al-Muṣṭaliq were a branch of the Banū Khuṣā'a but their policy towards the Prophet was different from the majority of the Banū Khuṣā'a who were friendly to Muḥammad.
 2. Near the Red Sea coast north-west of Mecca. Watt, Medina, p.35. At a distance of one night's journey from a place called Far' while this latter place was at a distance of 8 burds from Medina. I. Sa'd, II, p.63.

in joining them to fight Muḥammad and had come to make an alliance for this purpose because he had come to know that the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq intended to attack Medina. The enemy leader, Ḥārith b. Abī Dirār, happily agreed to this proposal and advised Burayda to go and bring his tribe as soon as possible to join his ranks. Burayda, then, left the place and came to Medina with the report that the previous report (of the travellers) was true.

The Prophet, then, set out to disperse this gathering. When he reached Baq'ā,⁽¹⁾ a suspected traveller fell into the hands of his companions, as mentioned earlier.⁽²⁾ 'Umar conveyed the information obtained from this spy to the Prophet and then killed the spy with his permission. The news of this killing reached the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq and terrified them. Then the Prophet reached al-Muraysī' where the enemy proved an easy prey and almost all of them were captured along with their herds.⁽³⁾

1. 24 miles from Medina. Samhūdī, II, p.264.

2. See above, p.31.

3. Wāqidī, I, pp.404-7; I. Sa'd, II, p.63; Ṭabarī, II, p.604; Ibn Qayyim, op. cit., II, pp.112-3; Maqrīzī, pp.195-6.

According to I. Hisham, II, p.199, this event took place after the siege of Medina in Sha'bān 6 A.H. and according to Wāqidī it took place in Rajab 5 A.H., but Jones puts it in Sha'bān 5 A.H. "Chronology", p.273.

This expedition is remarkable for its intelligence aspects. The Prophet received the news of a hostile gathering of the enemy through travellers who perhaps belonged to the Banū Khuzā'a. Then the Prophet verified this news through his spy who seems to have been experienced in intelligence trade, because before setting out on his mission he sought permission from the Prophet to say whatever he liked and then made use of this permission in a very good manner, pretending to the enemy that he had come to join them in order to fight Muḥammad and thus won their sympathies and got a chance to know their plans. The enemy, on the other hand, had its own information service and although one of their spies fell into the hands of the Prophet's companions, the fact that news of his killing reached the enemy indicates that they had some other source of information also which could not be identified by the Prophet and his companions.

Battle of al-Khandiq

The battle of the trench (al-Khandiq) which took place in Shawwāl 5 A.H. (627 A.D.) or a month later in Dhu 'l-Qa'da⁽²⁾ was the most serious attempt to put an end to Muḥammad and his sect made by the Meccans with the help of their allies from the Bedouin Arab tribes and the Jews. The Meccans had defeated Muḥammad, earlier, in the battle of Uhud with a force 3,000

1. I. Hishām, II, p.155.

2. Wāqidī, II, p.440; "Chronology", p.274.

strong and this time they had managed to collect a force 10,000⁽¹⁾ strong. They were, therefore, confident that they would finish off Muḥammad once and for all. They might have achieved their goal if the intelligence service had not come to the Prophet's rescue. It is stated that as soon as the Meccans left for Medina some members of the Banū Khuzā'a also set out towards Medina to inform the Prophet about the forthcoming attack. These Khuzā'īs reached Medina in four days⁽²⁾ and conveyed the news to the Prophet. In this way they not only saved the Prophet from a surprise attack but also provided him with enough time to think over the situation and adopt the best possible way to defend the city.

The Prophet availed himself of this opportunity and after discussing the situation with his companions he decided to entrench the city.⁽³⁾ The lay-out of the city was such that the outer line of the houses was built so compactly together that for a considerable distance these houses provided a high stone wall, already a solid defence. It was necessary on the one hand, however, to connect this barrier with the rocks which lay on the north-west approach of the city and on the other hand to carry the barrier round the open and

1. I. Hishām, II, p.159; Wāqidī, II, p.444. See Watt, Medina, p.36 where he expresses his doubts on this and appears to suggest that the numbers of this force were around 8,000.

2. Wāqidī, II, p.444; Maqrīzī, p.219.

3. I. Hishām, II, p.156; Wāqidī, II, p.445.

unsheltered quarters to the south and east.⁽¹⁾ The Prophet, therefore, ordered that a trench should be dug starting from Madhād⁽²⁾ up to Rātij⁽³⁾ and the job was done by dint of tremendous effort and exertion in six days⁽⁴⁾, some time before the arrival of the enemy forces. In this way the espionage system of the Prophet spoiled the chances of the enemy's taking the city by surprise. Otherwise, they would have been in a position to wipe out the Muslim force for ever. As one of their poets said later:

"But for this ditch to which they clung
we should have wiped them all out

But it was there before them, and they,
being afraid of us, skulked behind it."⁽⁵⁾

However, when the Meccan army reached Dhu 'l-Hulayfa⁽⁶⁾ Abū Sufyān sent Huyayy b. Akhtab, leader of the recently exiled Medinan Jewish tribe the Banū al-Nadīr and now in the camp of Abū Sufyān, to the Banū Qurayza, the remaining Jewish tribe

1. Muir, *op. cit.*, p.307.

2. The name of an *utum* of the Banū Ḥarām. Samhūdī, II, p.370.

3. The name of a hill beside the hill of the Banū 'Ubayd, west of Baḥān. Samhūdī, II, p.310.

4. Wāqidī, II, p.454; I. Sa'd, II, p.67; Haykal, p.303.

5. I. Hishām, II, p.179.

فلولا خندق كانوا لديه لدمرنا عليهم اجمعينا
ولكن حال دونهم وكانوا به من خوفنا متموزينا

6. A place 6 or 7 miles from Medina. Bakrī, II, p.464; Samhūdī, II, p.293.

in Medina, in order to persuade them to desert Muḥammad and join the allied forces. He reached the Qurayzī quarters secretly and met their leaders, who are reported to have been unwilling to desert Muḥammad because of their incapability of defending themselves against him, in case the allied army failed to inflict a fatal blow upon Muḥammad and returned to their homes. But Huyayy kept on arguing and at last managed to win them over to his side on the promise that he would enter their fort and await his fate with them if the allied army returned without having killed Muḥammad.⁽¹⁾

The desertion of the Banū Qurayza would have been a heavy blow to the Muslims if the Prophet had not been able to find out what was going on behind the scenes, especially since the Banū Qurayza were on the undefended side of the city. Thanks, however, to the espionage system which got wind of this desertion, the Prophet became aware of this impending danger and could take action accordingly. It is stated that 'Umar came to the Prophet and told him that he had discovered that

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1. I. Hishām, II, pp.159-60; Wāqidī, II, pp.454-6; Tabarī, II, pp.570-1. See also J. Hell who writes that the Jews still there (at Medina) were cooperating with the Meccans. The Arab Civilization, trans. S.K. Buksh (Cambridge, 1926), p.20 and F. Gabrieli who gives a similar statement on this issue. Muḥammad and the Conquests of Islam, trans. V. Luling and R. Linell (London, 1977), p.72.

the Banū Qurayza had defected.⁽¹⁾ Then at his suggestion the Prophet sent Zubayr towards the Jewish quarters in search of further news. Zubayr went out and saw the Jews repairing their forts and making other arrangements necessary for a battle. Then he came back and told the Prophet what he had seen.⁽²⁾ His report increased the anxiety of the Prophet who, then, sent Sa'd b. Mu'adh, Sa'd b. 'Ubada and Usayd b. Hudayr to meet the leaders of the Banū Qurayza to find out their real intentions and advised them not to announce their findings if unfavourable, for fear that it might affect the army's already flagging morale. These people went to the Jews, talked to their leaders and found out that they had decided to help the allied forces against the Prophet. They tried to persuade the Jewish leaders not to desert the Prophet but the Jews asked who the Prophet was. They had no agreement with him. Sa'd b. Mu'adh was a man of hasty temper so he reviled them and they reviled him and the meeting ended with bitter exchanges. The Prophet's men then returned to him and said "'Adal and al-Qāra". By these words they meant treachery like that of the 'Adal and al-Qāra tribes towards the people of al-Rajī'.⁽³⁾

1. Wāqidī, II, p.457; Irshād, V, p.68; Maqrīzī, p.227.

'Umar, however, did not reveal his source of information.

2. Wāqidī, II, p.457; Maqrīzī, p.227.

3. I. Hishām, II, p.160; Wāqidī, II, pp.458-9; Ṭabarī, II, pp.571-2; Ṭabarī, Taf., XXI, p.75; Maqrīzī, p.227.

According to I. Hishām and Ṭabarī the Prophet had sent 'Abdallāh b. Rawāḥa and Khawwāt b. Jubayr with the two Sa'ds instead of Usayd b. Hudayr.

The Prophet, then, formed a party of 200 men under the command of Salma b. Aslam and another under the command of Zayd b. Ḥāritha to patrol the territory adjoining the Jewish quarters and sent Khawwāt b. Jubayr towards the Jewish territory as a spy to forestall any hostile move.⁽¹⁾ The patrol parties worked satisfactorily but the spy fell asleep while on duty and woke up on the shoulders of a Jewish spy who was carrying him towards his fort to execute him. Khawwāt realised the dangerous situation and snatched the arms of the Jew, while still on his shoulders, and killed him.⁽²⁾

In the meantime, the Meccans and their allies had arrived and besieged Medina. The Prophet tried to make up the loss caused by the defection of the Banū Qurayza by winning over the Banū Ghaṭafān, who had joined this alliance on the promise of Huyayy that a whole year's date crops of Khaybar would be theirs as a gift.⁽³⁾ The Prophet perhaps knew this fact so he offered them a part of the produce of the dates of Medina in case of their retirement⁽⁴⁾ as mentioned earlier.⁽⁵⁾ The Banū Ghaṭafān were Bedouins and were accustomed to a 'hit and run'

1. Wāqidī, II, p.460; Maqrīzī, p.228.

2. Wāqidī, II, pp.460-1; Maqrīzī, p.228.

3. Wāqidī, II, p.443.

4. I. Hishām, II, p.161; Wāqidī, II, p.477; Amwāl, pp.235-6; I. Sa'd, II, p.69; Ṭabarī, II, pp.572-3; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.30; Maqrīzī, p.235; Ḥamīdullāh, Wathā'iq (Beirut, 1969), p.56; Belyaev, op. cit., p.107; Gould, op. cit., p.130.

5. See above, p.83.

style of battle. To besiege an enemy for a long time in order to force them to submit to their terms was an unfamiliar concept to them. In the present case they, along with the Meccans, were suffering from a shortage of fodder for their horses and camels which meant that it was impossible for them to prolong the siege in order to defeat Muḥammad and get their share of the booty. Therefore they showed their willingness to accept what was offered and return to their territory. But the Prophet, as mentioned earlier,⁽¹⁾ dropped the project.

Worried by the increasing threat of the enemy from both sides of the trench and the unco-operative behaviour of some of his companions the Prophet once more sought help from intelligence. It is stated that Nu'aym b. Mas'ūd of the Banū Ghatafān came to the Prophet and told him that he had become a Muslim but that nobody knew about his conversion. He put his services at the disposal of the Prophet who advised him to do something to break up the confederacy. Thereupon Nu'aym went to the Banū Qurayza. In a friendly manner he expressed his anxiety over their future if the allied forces returned home without inflicting a heavy blow on Muḥammad. He suggested to them that they should take some hostages from the chiefs of the confederates as a guarantee that they would not leave them alone in face of Muḥammad. The Banū Qurayza agreed to this proposal. Nu'aym, then, went to the Quraysh and told them that he had come to know that the Banū Qurayza had decided to desert them and had planned to take some hostages from them and

1. See above, p. 83.

then hand them over to Muḥammad for execution as a proof of their faithfulness towards him. Nu'aym advised them not to hand over a single hostage on their demand. Then he went to the leaders of the Banū Ghatafān and told them the same story as he had told the Quraysh.⁽¹⁾

Thus Nu'aym sowed the seeds of disaffection between different parties and when, later on, the Quraysh sent 'Ikrima to the leaders of the Banū Qurayẓa asking them to advance against Muḥammad they demanded hostages as a guarantee that they would not leave them alone to the mercy of Muḥammad if the tide turned against them. The Quraysh and the Banū Ghatafān then believed the report of Nu'aym and refused to send hostages. Upon this refusal the Banū Qurayẓa became sure that Nu'aym was speaking the truth and they dropped the idea of taking part in the battle against Muḥammad in favour of the

1. I. Hishām, II, pp.164-5; Wāqidī, II, pp.480-2; I. Sa'd, II, p.69; Ṭabarī, II, pp.578-9; Istī'āb, III, p.557; Ibn Qayyim, op. cit., II, p.118; I. Khaldūn, II(2), pp.30-1; Maqrīzī, pp.236-8; Isāba, III, p.568; Ibshihī, op. cit., II, pp.125-6; al-Zarqānī, op. cit., II, pp.116-7; Haykal, pp.309-10; Ḥasan, I, 119.

Belyaev points out another aspect of the activities of the Prophet's secret agents when he says,

"The most important factor, however, was the success of the Medinese agents in rekindling the old grudge of the Bedouin against their Meccan overlords, the Qurayshites, who had led them in their thankless and fruitless venture."

op. cit., p.107.

confederates.⁽¹⁾ As the only possibility of storming Medina lay in the cooperation of the Banū Qurayza which now seemed impossible, Abū Sufyān decided to give up the siege. The news of this decision at once reached the Prophet through Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān who was in the enemy camp in quest of news.⁽²⁾

In the sequence of events which culminated in the siege of Medina, the intelligence service of the Prophet seems therefore to have worked very satisfactorily. It saved the Prophet from a surprise attack of the largest army which had been raised against him so far in the first place and provided him with a chance to entrench the city as a defensive measure in the second place. Thirdly, the intelligence service got wind of the desertion of the Banū Qurayza and saved the Prophet from being boxed in. Fourthly, it sowed the seeds of disaffection among the different sections of the enemy which marked the end of the siege. As the two armies did not come

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1. I. Hishām, II, p.165; Wāqidī, II, pp.483-4; I. Sa'd, II, p.69; Ṭabarī, II, p.579; Ṭabarī, Taf., XXI, p.73; I. Khaldūn, II(2), pp.30-1; Maqrīzī, p.238; al-Suyūṭī, al-Khaṣā'is al-Kubrā (Cairo, 1386 A.H.), p.575; Kanz, X, p.283.
 2. I. Hishām, II, p.166; Wāqidī, II, pp.489-90; I. Sa'd, II, p.69; Irshād, V, p.68; Muslim, III, pp.165-66; Ṭabarī, II, pp.579-81; Istī'āb, I, p.277; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.31; al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., I, p.575; Kanz, X, p.283. See also p. 38 above where a brief account of Ḥudhayfa's activities has been given.

face to face to fight each other, except for some individuals who exchanged a few blows with each other, it may be suggested that the credit for the successful defence of Medina goes only to the intelligence service of the Prophet. With these remarks we move on to 'Urana where another successful intelligence operation had taken place.

Between al-Khandiq and al-Hudaybiyya

It is stated that the Prophet received intelligence that the chief of the Banū Lihyān was gathering a force at 'Urana, a spot between Mecca and al-Tā'if, to make a raid on Medina. The Prophet decided to break up this gathering by assassinating the chief, the man responsible for this gathering. He, therefore, sent the earlier mentioned⁽¹⁾ 'Abdallāh b. Unays for this purpose and advised him to pose as a tribesman of the Banū Khuza'a. When 'Abdallāh reached the spot he met the chief and introduced him as a Khuza'i who had come to know about his attempts to raise an army against Muḥammad and had come to join his ranks because he himself was extremely hostile to the Prophet. The chief became very happy and entertained 'Abdallāh generously. 'Abdallah, however, soon found a chance to fulfil his mission and killed the chief when he was alone.⁽²⁾

1. See above, p.17.

2. I. Hishām, II, pp.401-2; Wāqidī, II, pp.531-3; I. Sa'd, II, pp.50-1; Saḥnūn b. Sa'īd, al-Mudawwana (Cairo, 1323 A.H.), III, p.3; I. Khayyāt, p.43; Tanbīh (B), p.212; Usūl, V, p.749; Maqrīzī, pp.254-5; Isāba, II, p.279. According to Wāqidī this event took place in al-Muḥarram 6 A.H.,

This operation is noteworthy for its intelligence aspects. As mentioned earlier, the Prophet received accurate information about the gathering and its objectives. Then, instead of sending a force to disperse it, he sent a secret agent to assassinate the chief and thereby to get the gathering dispersed. The Prophet also advised his agent how to work in the circumstances he was going to face by telling him to pose as a Khuzā'ī. The agent proved himself up to the mark and fulfilled his mission without any mistake.

Here is another expedition containing some elements of espionage. It is stated that the Prophet sent out a party of his followers under the command of 'Ukāsha b. Miḥṣan against the Banū Asad to al-Ghamr,⁽¹⁾ perhaps to punish them for taking part in the alliance which had laid siege to Medina. The Banū Asad received an early warning and dispersed to higher territory. When 'Ukāsha reached their watering-place he

according to I. Khayyāṭ it took place in 5 A.H., according to Tanbīh it took place in 4 A.H., and according to I. Sa'd it took place before the siege of Medina while Jones puts it in al-Muḥarram 4 A.H. "Chronology", p.274. The name of the chief was Khālīd b. Sufyān according to Ibn Hishām but Wāqidī, Ibn Sa'd and Maqrīzī say that his name was Sufyān b. Khālīd.

1. A well of the Banū Asad on the road to Najd from Medina. Samhūdī, II, p.353, and at a distance of two nights' journey from Fayd towards Medina. I. Sa'd, II, p.84.

found the place deserted. He then sent out spies to find some clue as to the whereabouts of the enemy. Shujā' b. Wahb, one of the spies, came back with the report that he had seen the footprints of the animals nearby and, then, led the party towards them. While following the footprints the party came across a sleeping man. They woke him up and captured him. He happened to be an enemy spy who had kept a watch throughout the night but fell asleep in the morning. When asked about the enemy he answered that they had run away along with their herds. It was suspected that he was telling lies, so he was tortured. Then he said that if they spared his life he would tell them about another herd. They promised and he, then, took them round a hill where they found a herd with very few guards who ran away and the party captured 200 camels.⁽¹⁾

During this expedition the spies of both sides seem to have been at work. The Banū Asad procured information through their information service about the march of the Prophet's companions against them and saved themselves from an attack by changing the place of their camp. They also posted one of their spies behind them to keep themselves abreast of further developments but because this man could not keep himself awake in the cool breeze of the morning in the desert after performing his duties throughout the night, he unluckily fell into the hands of the raiding party. The Muslims, on the other hand,

1. Wāqidī, II, pp.550-1; Ṭabarī, II, p.640. The date given by Wāqidī for this event is Rabī' al-Awwal 6 A.H.

also sought help from espionage to find out the whereabouts of the enemy when they found that the reported place of the enemy's camp was deserted. One of their spies managed to find the footprints of the animals which, most probably, belonged to the enemy and then the party started to follow them. In their attempt to pursue the enemy the party came across an enemy spy and made use of him for their further activities.

Two months later, the intelligence service of the Prophet brought home another success, the details of which are as follows. The Meccans were worried about their trade because the Prophet had virtually brought it to a standstill by threatening the earlier mentioned caravan of Abū Sufyān⁽¹⁾ which was travelling on the coastal route from Mecca to Syria and then by capturing their earlier mentioned⁽²⁾ caravan at Qarada which had been sent by the 'Irāq route about which they believed that the Prophet and his companions knew nothing. As the prosperity and even the existence of the Meccans were in danger without trade, they, therefore, decided to take a risk and despatched a caravan to Syria by the coastal route. To their misfortune, the intelligence service of the Prophet got wind of this caravan and the Prophet sent out Zayd b. Ḥāritha with 170 soldiers to intercept it when it was on its way home.⁽³⁾

1. See above pp. II9-20, I23-4.

2. See above pp. I38.

3. Donner says that the Prophet generally attacked the Meccan caravans on their homeward journey because they used to carry staple foodstuffs (along with other items) on this

Zayd overtook the caravan while it was at al-‘Īs.⁽¹⁾ He fell suddenly upon it and captured the whole merchandise along with some caravaners among whom was Abu'l-‘Āṣ b. al-Rabī‘, the son-in-law of the Prophet.⁽²⁾

It may be interesting to note that the Meccans must have kept the news of the despatch of this caravan a closely-guarded secret because of their previous experiences but the Prophet's intelligence service seems to have become so effective in the case of the Meccans that it got wind of this news. Then the Prophet arranged an expedition with such secrecy that the Meccans could do nothing other than bemoan their losses.

In Sha‘bān 6 A.H. the Prophet received intelligence that the Banū Sa‘d were gathering at Fadak⁽³⁾ in order to attack Medina with the help of the Jews of Khaybar. The Prophet despatched an expedition under the command of ‘Alī to break up

phase of their journey. "Mecca's Food Supplies and Muhammad's Boycott", JESHO, XX (1977), pp.256-7.

1. The fourth station from Medina and a night's journey to the right from Dhu'l-Marwa. Tanbīh (L), p.253. Four nights' journey from Medina and a night's journey from Dhu'l-Marwa. I. Sa‘d, II, p.87; Samhūdī, II, p.348.
2. Wāqidī, II, p.553; I. Sa‘d, II, p.87.
3. Five or six nights' journey from Medina. Tanbīh (L), p.253. According to Samhūdī, II, pp.354-5 there are different opinions on the distance from Medina to Fadak which are two days', three days', and six nights' journey.

the gathering. When 'Alī reached Hamaj⁽¹⁾ he captured an enemy tribesman from whom he asked the whereabouts of his tribe. The prisoner at first refused to say anything but after he had been tortured he said that he was a spy sent out by his tribe, the Banū Sa'd, who had gathered two hundred soldiers under the command of Wabar b. 'Ulaym. He offered his services to lead the Muslim party towards the enemy gathering and their herds on the promise of his safety. 'Alī promised to do so and travelled under his guidance and fell upon the herds. Some of the shepherds ran away and informed their tribe about the raid. They, then, scattered without offering any resistance. 'Alī returned to Medina with a booty of 500 camels and 2,000 goats.⁽²⁾

This expedition is remarkable for its intelligence aspects. First of all, the Prophet received accurate information about an enemy gathering through his sources of intelligence. Secondly, he managed to keep the despatch secret so that none of the enemy's agents at Medina could warn the Banū Sa'd. Thirdly, the Banū Sa'd seem to have been aware of the importance of espionage during the warfare because the event under

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1. Name of a well between Khaybar and Fadak. I. Sa'd, II, p.90; while Khaybar is at a distance of 8 burds from Medina. I. Sa'd, II, p.106; Qazwīnī, Āthār al-Bilād (Beirut, n.d.), p.92 but according to Ḥāfiẓ Wahba, Khaybar is 60 miles from Medina to the north, op. cit., p.24 and Dabbāgh says that Khaybar is 189 kilometres from Medina in the north west direction, op. cit., p.127.
 2. Wāqidī, II. pp.562-3; I. Sa'd, II, pp.89-90; Ṭabarī, II, p.642.

discussion shows that they had sent a spy in order to get timely warning of their enemy's activities. Fourthly, the Prophet's companions knew the importance of procuring information through captured enemy tribesmen and then buying his services by the promises of his safety. Lastly, the enemy's shepherds performed the duties of warner (nadhīr) and saved the main body of their tribe from destruction.

In Shawwāl 6 A.H. the Prophet sent out Kurz b. Jābir with twenty horsemen to chase some Bedouin who had come to visit him and then had treacherously carried away his herd grazing at Dhu'l-Jadr.⁽¹⁾ Kurz and his party went out but could not find any traces of the robbers and became worried about the situation. Then all of a sudden they saw a woman passing that way carrying a shoulder of a slaughtered camel. The party captured the woman and asked her where she had procured that meat. She said that she had passed some people who had slaughtered a camel and they had given it to her. Kurz and his companions became suspicious of those people and asked her where she had met them. When she informed them of the meeting place the party went there and captured all the robbers.⁽²⁾

This expedition is important because it succeeded with the help of an informant and because the vehicle of intelligence was a traveller who happened to be a woman. The party seemed to be aware of the importance of procuring information through

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1. Six miles from Medina in the vicinity of Qubā. I. Sa'd, II, p.93; Samhūdī, II, p.279.
 2. Wāqidī, II, pp.568-9.

travellers and then making use of it.

Al-Hudaybiyya

(1)

The expedition of al-Hudaybiyya which resulted in a peace treaty between the Prophet and the Meccans was undertaken in Dhu'l-Qa'da 6 A.H.⁽²⁾ It is stated that the Prophet set out towards Mecca for the lesser pilgrimage accompanied by some 1,600 men dressed in pilgrim garb and some sacrificial victims.⁽³⁾

From Dhu'l-Hulayfa the Prophet sent out Busr b. Sufyān of the Banū Ka'b of the Banū Khuza'a to Mecca on a spying mission. When the Prophet reached 'Usfān, Busr came back to report to him what he had found out at Mecca. A part of this report has been mentioned earlier⁽⁴⁾. In addition to that, he

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1. A settlement nine miles north of Mecca. P.K. Hitti, Makers of Arab History (London, 1969), p.17.
 2. I. Hishām, II, p.210; I. Sa'd, II, p.95.
 3. I. Hishām, II, p.210; I. Sa'd, II, p.95. In the course of planning this journey the Prophet might have thought that when the Quraysh came to know of his journey they would find themselves in a difficult situation. If they decided not to let him enter Mecca for the pilgrimage it would be counted as a very great moral offence on their part. On the other hand, his entry into Mecca at the head of a large force could be interpreted as a loss of prestige for the Quraysh. In both cases, he was going to win.
 4. See above, pp.31-2.

told the Prophet that if any one of the spies, posted by the Quraysh on the hills from Baldah to Wazr, noticed any activity on his, the Prophet's, part, the spy would pass that information on to the next one behind him and ultimately it would reach the Quraysh at Baldah in no time and the Quraysh would then be in a position to take immediate action.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet had, perhaps, under-estimated the morale of the Quraysh after their failure to storm Medina the previous year. He was, perhaps, of the opinion that the mere presence of 1,600 soldiers in his cavalcade would force the Meccans to open the doors of their city for him. But Busr's report that the Meccan cavalry had been posted on his route and that a large number of their soldiers had gathered outside Mecca to resist his entrance into the city showed him the real picture. In this new situation, if he returned to Medina it would have been a shameful retreat and a sign of acceptance of the supremacy of the Quraysh. On the other hand, if at this stage of his career he had met face to face with the Quraysh on their doorstep without adequate arms and so far away from his stronghold, Medina, he would have been inevitably crushed.⁽²⁾

1. Wāqidī, II, pp.579-80; Maqrīzī, p.278.

2. As many of the Bedouin Arabs from the Banū Bakr, the Banū Muzayna and the Banū Juhayna held back when the Prophet invited them to join the expedition saying that he would never come back because he was going to meet such a powerful enemy in such a weak position. Wāqidī, II, p.574.

But the Prophet extricated himself from this difficult situation because of the comprehensive report of Busr which included the names of the places where Khālīd and the Meccan spies had been posted. The Prophet decided to avoid them and by a little known route he reached al-Ḥudaybiyya,⁽¹⁾ on the verge of the sacred territory encircling Mecca, where he encamped in a position which meant a threat to Mecca. Hence he paralysed the Meccan cavalry, headed by Khālīd, and jammed their espionage system and changed their aggression into defence. Their cavalry returned to Mecca to defend the city and they began to send deputations to ascertain his real intentions.⁽²⁾

Here is not the place to discuss what happened during the negotiations leading to the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya which proved to be so fruitful for the Prophet that al-Qur'ān mentions it as a 'clear victory'.⁽³⁾ Suffice it to say that this discussion has demonstrated that the Prophet managed to conclude this treaty because of his superior information service. Although the Meccans had procured information on the Prophet's projected route through their agents at Medina and then had adopted a comprehensive system for communicating the information about the activities of the Prophet by posting their spies on hill-

1. I. Hishām, II, p.211; Wāqidī, II, pp.583-4; I. Sa'd, II, pp.95-6; Ṭabarī, II, pp.623-4; Maqrīzī, pp.282-3.

2. Wāqidī, II, pp.594, 599; Ṭabarī, II, pp.626-9; I. Hishām, II, pp.212-3; Maqrīzī, pp.277-8.

3. Al-Qur'ān, XLVIII:1 (فتحا مبنا)

tops and adopting a secret language, it was the Prophet's espionage system which carried the day. First of all, it furnished the Prophet with the news that the Quraysh had heard about his projected journey. Secondly, it penetrated deep into the Meccan ranks and procured information about the places where the spies and cavalry had been posted which enabled the Prophet to dodge them and reach al-Hudaybiyya safely, thus bringing the Quraysh to the negotiating table.

Conquest of Khaybar

The treaty of al-Hudaybiyya relieved the Prophet of the danger of further attacks on Medina by the Quraysh. Until this treaty most of his energy was being wasted against the Quraysh and their Bedouin allies but now he became capable of dealing with other enemies more effectively. The part played by the Jews of Khaybar in the battle of the trench⁽¹⁾ was enough for them to become the first target of the Prophet for an all-out attack.⁽²⁾

1. See above, pp.155-6.

2. Actually the Prophet had opened his account with the Jews of Khaybar long before this time. He had secretly assassinated one of their leaders named Abū Rāfi' Ibn al-Huqayq by his secret agents in 4 A.H. when he, the Prophet, came to know about his hostile activities towards him. I. Hishām, II, pp.190-1; Mālik b. Anas, Muwattā, ed., A.A. 'Armūsh (Beirut, 1400 A.H.), p.296; Wāqidī, I, pp.391-4; Sahnūn, op. cit., III, p.3; Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Muḥabbar,

When the Prophet started his preparation for an attack on Khaybar, the Jews of Medina sent word to their brethren at Khaybar of the coming storm through a man of the Banū Fazāra of the Banū Ghatafān who had come to Medina to sell his commercial articles.⁽¹⁾ The Khaybarites, therefore, started their preparations to repel the attack and Kināna b. Abi 'l-Huqayq, one of their leaders, went to the Banū Ghatafān and

(Hyderabad Deccan, 1361 A.H.), p.282; Uṣūl, VIII, p.228; al-Khafājī, Nasīm al-Riyād (Cairo, 1325-7 A.H.), IV, p.371. In 6 A.H. the Prophet came to know through Khārija b. Ḥusayl of the Banū Ashji' that a leader of the Jews of Khaybar named Usayr b. Zārim was trying to raise an army with the help of the Banū Ghatafān in order to attack Medina. To ascertain the news the Prophet had sent 'Abdallāh b. Rawāḥa with other spies to Khaybar. When they reported back that the news was true, the Prophet, then, again sent Ibn Rawāḥa with 30 riders with an invitation, as is stated, to Usayr asking him to visit Medina to make an agreement with the Prophet and, as a result, he, Usayr, would be appointed as chief of Khaybar by the Prophet. The plan, however, failed because the riders on their way back to Medina became suspicious of treachery from Usayr, who was accompanying them to Medina, and killed him along with his 30 companions. 'Urwa, pp.195-6; I. Hishām, II, p.400; Wāqidī, II, pp.566-8; I. Sa'd, II, p.92.

1. Wāqidī, II, pp.641-2.

sought their help with the promise of half the date crops of Khaybar that year.⁽¹⁾

The Prophet set out for Khaybar in al-Muḥarram⁽²⁾ 7 A.H.
or a month later in Ṣafar⁽³⁾ and sent 'Ubād b. Bashr with some other riders in advance. These riders came across a man who belonged to the Banū Ashj' whom they questioned about his activities. He told them that he was searching for his lost camels. Then they asked him if he knew something about the activities of the Jews of Khaybar. He told them that Kināna and Hawdha b. Qays had brought the Banū Ghaṭafān to their help on the promise of a year's date crops of Khaybar. In this way they had collected 10,000 soldiers in their forts with a large amount of arms and food. 'Ubād whipped the man and said that he seemed to be a spy of the Jews and threatened to kill him if he did not speak the truth. The man then told him that the Jews of Medina had informed the Jews of Khaybar about the Prophet's intentions and about the shortage of arms and horses at his disposal. He further said that Kināna had sent him towards them, the Muslim force, advising him to meet them, as a stranger, and to spread rumours about the strength of the Jews to frighten them and then to try to return to Khaybar with information about them. 'Ubād, then, brought this man to

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1. Wāqidī, II, p.642; Maqrīzī, p.310. According to another report, all the crops of one year were promised. Wāqidī, II, p.640.
 2. I. Hishām, II, p.223; Ṭabarī, III, p.9.
 3. Wāqidī, II, p.634. According to Jones this event took place between Dhu'l-Ḥijja 6 A.H. and al-Muḥarram 7 A.H. "Chronology", p.279.

the Prophet whereupon 'Umar suggested killing him but the Prophet spared his life because 'Ubād had assured him of his safety, but put him under guard.⁽¹⁾

Although the Jews had been apprised of the Prophet's intentions and had made necessary arrangements to repulse a possible attack, they were unaware of the time chosen by the Prophet for the attack. To obtain such information they had sent out a spy but he was captured. This counter-intelligence operation of the Prophet kept the Jews unaware of his march and he reached Khaybar unexpectedly.

Soon after his arrival at Khaybar the Prophet tried to buy off the Banū Ghatafān who were 4,000 strong. He sent Sa'd b. Mu'ādh to meet 'Uyayna, who was in a Jewish fort, and offered him a year's crops of Khaybar for his retirement but 'Uyayna refused to accept this offer.⁽²⁾ Then a rumour, most probably at the Prophet's instigation, was spread that the settlements of the Banū Ghatafān were under attack.⁽³⁾ The propagation of this false news, which is, after all, an important aspect of intelligence work, forced the Banū Ghatafān to return to their territory to defend their own households⁽⁴⁾ and to leave the

1. Wāqidī, II, pp.640-1.

2. Ibid., II, pp.650-1.

3. Ibid., II, pp.650-2.

4. Ibid., II, pp.650-2. Ṭabarī says that the Banū Ghatafān were not with the Jews in their forts but were on their way to Khaybar from their territory to help the Jews when the above rumour was spread among them and they, therefore,

Jews alone to face the Prophet's army.

Khaybar was an oasis which consisted of many forts, such as al-Zubayr, Sa'b b. Mu'adh, Nā'im, Nizār, Qāmūs, Waṭīḥ and Sulālim. The forts were built on the hill tops and were provided with a constant supply of water. According to the Jews, this oasis was invincible.⁽¹⁾ The desertion of the Banū Ghaṭafān was a serious blow to their defence but still the Jews were strong enough to withstand a long siege. Luckily the Prophet found some traitors from the Jews who offered their assistance on the promise of safety for themselves and for their families. One such Jew was Simāk who was captured by 'Umar when the latter was on duty to guard the Muslim camp at night. 'Umar ordered his companions to kill the Jew but the latter requested an audience with their Prophet. 'Umar took him to the Prophet where Simāk said that the Jews of the fort of Naṭāt were shifting to another fort deserting their own, where they had large quantities of arms and equipment including a catapult buried in the ground. In the morning, the Prophet attacked that fort and conquered it because of its inadequate defences. Then he excavated the place mentioned by Simāk and

returned to save their own household. III, p.9. Ṭabarī also records another view according to which the Jews were in their forts and the Banū Ghaṭafān were in their territory and the Prophet stationed his force between the two to keep them apart from each other. III, p.9.

1. Wāqidī, II, pp.637, 647, 648, 666.

found the arms and equipment. The catapult was brought immediately into use and heavy stones were thrown by it onto the walls of a neighbouring fort named Nizār. This bombardment shattered the defences of the fort and the Prophet soon conquered it.⁽¹⁾

Another such traitor was Ghazzāl. He was brought to the Prophet by his guards when the Prophet was struggling to storm the fort of al-Zubayr. Ghazzāl advised the Prophet to cut off the water supply of the besieged Jews to force them to surrender and told him how to do it. The Prophet acted upon his advice and the Jews could no longer stay in their fort because of thirst and came out to fight the Prophet. They soon were defeated and the Prophet conquered their fort.⁽²⁾

Here is not the place to give the details of the battles leading to the conquest of the oasis of Khaybar. Suffice it to say that although the Jews of Khaybar had received information about the Prophet's intentions through their brethren at Medina and had tried to terrify the advancing Muslim force by publishing overwhelming estimates of their numbers, the Prophet's army won the battle because of its superior information service. The Prophet's army managed to capture an enemy spy and instead of becoming terrified by his account made him a tongue against his own employers, which is a part of counter-intelligence work. Then the Prophet succeeded in forcing the Banū Ghatafān to mind

1. Wāqidī, II, pp.646-8; Isāba, II, p.77; C. Brockelmann, History of the Islamic Peoples, trans. Joel Carmichael (London, 1949), p.28.

2. Wāqidī, II, pp.666-7.

their own business, leaving the Jews alone by spreading a false rumour, which is yet another facet of espionage. Then he managed to penetrate the Jewish ranks and found some traitors who made his task easy. The use of such men is again a part of espionage work.

From Khaybar to Mecca

In Sha'bān 7 A.H. the Prophet sent an expedition under the command of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to Turaba against the Banū Hawāzin. The news of this despatch is said to have reached them beforehand and, therefore, they dispersed. 'Umar returned to Medina without fighting.⁽¹⁾

This expedition is remarkable because an enemy so far from Medina procured information about a despatch against them beforehand, which shows what an effective information service they had.⁽²⁾

1. Four nights' journey from Mecca on the road to Ṣan'ā'.

I. Sa'd, II, p.117; Maqrīzī, p.333.

2. Wāqidī, II, p.722; I. Sa'd, II, p.117; Ṭabarī, III, p.22.

3. It may be interesting to note that the Banū Hawāzin, against whom the present expedition was directed, had procured information about the activities of the Prophet which resulted in the conquest of Mecca, while the Meccans were completely unaware of what was going on at Medina in spite of the fact that one of their spies had been captured by the Prophet's army, as will be discussed later on. See below, pp.193-4, 203.

In the same month the Prophet sent another expedition composed of 30 soldiers under the command of Bashīr b. Sa'd to Fadak against the Banū Murra. While on their way they met some shepherds and asked them about the whereabouts of the Banū Murra. The shepherds told them that the Banū Murra were in their valleys. The party then attacked one of the enemy groups, plundered their animals and went on their way home. It was not very late when the main body of the Banū Murra came to know of this raid. They pursued the raiders, took them on their way home and killed all of them except Bashīr, who was injured and left for dead.⁽¹⁾

This expedition, although unsuccessful, from the Muslim point of view, contains elements of espionage. Firstly, the raiding party made use of the shepherds, whom they had met on their way, as a source of information. Secondly, as Wāqidī does not tell us what happened to these shepherds, whether they were set free or were taken prisoners, it may be assumed that the party let them go and that they perhaps belonged to some enemy tribe. They, therefore, worked as warners and informed the main body of the Banū Murra who then pursued the raiders and succeeded in killing them. According to this assumption, the raiding party met its fate because of their inexperience in intelligence work.

The Prophet then sent Ghālib b. 'Abdallāh with 100 soldiers to punish the Banū Murra. When Ghālib came near to them he sent out spies in search of news. One of the spies, 'Ulbā

1. Wāqidī, II, p.723; I. Sa'd, II, pp.118-9.

b. Zayd, came back and told his leader that he had seen a gathering of the enemy nearby. Ghālīb fell upon this gathering suddenly and captured a large amount of booty.⁽¹⁾

Ghālīb, as presented in the above story, seems to have been a wise and careful man, as he did not lose his temper because of the punitive nature of his expedition but sought help from espionage to carry out his mission in the best possible way. He consequently succeeded in his mission.

When Bashīr b. Sa'd recovered from his injuries the Prophet sent him in Shawwāl 7 A.H. with 300 soldiers to Janāb.⁽²⁾ The reason attributed to this expedition is said to have been the intelligence report of Ḥusayl b. Nuwayra of the Banū Ashja'. It is stated that Ḥusayl came to Medina and told the Prophet that he had seen a gathering of the Banū Ghatafān at Janāb with aggressive designs against Medina. The Prophet despatched an expedition and sent him, Ḥusayl, as a guide with it. When the party reached Salāḥ, in the oasis of Khaybar, Ḥusayl was sent to spy out the location of the enemy. After a short time Ḥusayl came back with the news that he had seen a herd belonging to the enemy nearby. The party, then, marched forward and captured the herd. When they again reached Salāḥ on their homeward journey they came across an enemy spy whom they put to death. When they resumed their journey they saw a gathering of the Banū Ghatafān headed by 'Uyayna who was taken

1. Wāqidī, II, pp.723-4.

2. Between Medina and Fayd in the territory of the Banū Fazāra of the Banū Ghatafān. Samhūdī, II, p.282.

by surprise, perhaps because his spy, presumably the one who was killed by the raiding party, had not reported to him about the presence of his enemies, the raiding party, nearby. The gathering, therefore, dispersed after a short fight and the raiders returned to Medina safe and sound.⁽¹⁾

Bashīr b. Sa'd during this expedition seems to have been a different person from the one who was sent out against the Banū Murra. He seems to have learned much from the previous expedition and therefore in the present one he did not hesitate to kill the enemy spy and thus not only took 'Uyayna by surprise but also saved himself and his party from the fate which he had experienced before.

In Dhu 'l-Hijja 7 A.H. the Prophet sent Ibn Abi'l-'Awjā' of the Banū Sulaym, one of his companions, towards the Banū Sulaym with 50 soldiers. As mentioned earlier⁽²⁾, there was a spy of the Banū Sulaym among the party who deserted it as soon as it left Medina and took the news of the advancing party to his tribe. The purpose of this despatch is said to have been to invite the Banū Sulaym to accept Islam. When the party reached its destination Ibn Abi'l-'Awjā' invited his kinsmen to accept the religion which he himself had accepted but they refused to do so and attacked the Muslim party. The Muslims fought back but all of them except their leader were killed at the hand of the Banū Sulaym.⁽³⁾

1. Wāqidī, II, pp.727-8; Tabarī, III, p.23; Maqrīzī, pp.335-6.

2. See above, p.136 f.n.1.

3. Wāqidī, II, p.741; I. Sa'd, II, p.123.

Regardless of its mission this expedition is remarkable because it contains evidence, as mentioned earlier,⁽¹⁾ on one of the sources of information of the Bedouin tribes who were hostile towards Muḥammad, namely that they, or some of them, had posted their spies at Medina most probably in the guise of converts to Muḥammad's religion (as otherwise the above mentioned spy had no chance of being enlisted in the party and if the party was sent out as religious instructors then the spy must have been well versed in Islamic teachings and in Muḥammad's good books).

In Ṣafar 8 A.H. the Prophet sent an expedition under the command of Ghālīb b. 'Abdallāh to Kadīd⁽²⁾ against the Banū Mulawwah of the Banū Layth. When the party reached Qudayd they came across a man named Ḥārith b. Mālīk who told them, when asked, that he was going to Medina to become a Muslim. The party arrested him saying that if he was speaking the truth it would not do him any harm but in the opposite case, namely that he was an enemy spy, they would save themselves from his intrigues. Then the party reached Kadīd in the evening and sent out Jundub b. Mukayth as a scout. The activities of this scout have been mentioned earlier⁽³⁾ and on the basis of the information brought by him the party attacked the enemy and

1. See above, p.105 f.n.2.

2. The name of a valley on the road to Fayd from Medina.
Samhūdī, II, p.365.

3. See above, p.24.

captured some of them along with their herds.⁽¹⁾

As to the intelligence aspects of this expedition it may be mentioned that Ghālīb proved himself an experienced person in intelligence work. He did not take any chances when a traveller told him that he was going to Medina to become his fellow Muslim. Instead of showing any courtesy which is quite natural in such circumstances, he arrested him without hesitation, for fear that he might be an enemy spy. Then Ghālīb sent out a spy who proved himself up to the mark and did not even move when the enemy shot at him two arrows, one by one, because he knew that the success of his party's mission lay in his attitude. When, after receiving two arrows, he did not move, the enemy became sure that the arrows had hit an object without life and went his way satisfied with the situation. Jundūb, then, managed to reach his party and conveyed his intelligence to his leader who made use of it in the best possible manner.

In Rabi' al-Awwal 8 A.H. the Prophet sent Ka'b b. 'Umayr with a party of 14 men over the border into Syria. It is not mentioned against whom they were sent. The only thing mentioned is that an enemy spy noticed them and took the news to the enemy who fell upon the party when it was at Dhāt Aṭlāḥ in Syria and killed all of them except one who survived to tell the tale.⁽²⁾

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1. I. Hishām, II, pp.394-5; Wāqidī, II, pp.750-1; I. Sa'd, II, pp.124-5; Ṭabarī, III, pp.27-8; Maqrīzī, pp.342-3.
 2. Wāqidī, II, pp.752-3.

As Muir suggests, the object of this expedition seems to have been to obtain information about the activities of the people of that area⁽¹⁾ perhaps because the party was too small to make any kind of raid into such a distant area. However, this expedition indicates that the people who lived so far away from Medina were interested in and kept their eyes on the activities of the Prophet through their spies.⁽²⁾

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1. Op cit., p.393. The Prophet seems to have been in the habit of sending small parties such as this and the one which met its fate at al-Rajī' (see pp.146-8) to keep himself aware of the situation in different enemy quarters. The exact number of such expeditions is unknown because the sources seem to record such activities only when something went wrong.
 2. Although the identity of the person who took the news of this despatch to the people of the Syrian border is not specifically mentioned in the context of this event an assumption may be made in this regard. Wāqidī states that in 10 A.H. the Prophet came to know through traders who were called sāqita that an enemy gathering with hostile designs against Medina had taken place on the Syrian border and the Prophet, therefore, started his preparation for an expedition which is known as the expedition of Tabūk. Wāqidī also states that these traders used to circulate the news about the activities of the people who lived on the Syrian border among the Medinans because they used to travel between Medina and Syria in connection with their

In Jumādā 'l-Ūlā 8 A.H. the Prophet sent a force 3,000 strong under the command of Zayd b. Ḥāritha to the Syrian border. The reason assigned to this expedition is said to have been the murder of Muḥammad's messenger, Ḥārith b. 'Umayr at Mu'ta when he was on his way to Buṣra.⁽¹⁾ It is stated that the news of this despatch travelled more quickly than the expedition itself and the enemy, apprised of the advancing Muslim force, gathered under the command of Shurahbīl b. 'Amr of the Banū Azd for an encounter. When Zayd reached Ma'an,⁽²⁾ in the Syrian territory but some distance away from Mu'ta, he was informed of the enemy's preparations and the reported strength of the enemy was so great that it seemed impossible to win a battle against them.⁽³⁾

Zayd discussed the situation with his comrades. It was suggested that they should write a letter to the Prophet requesting him for advice or reinforcements. Until then, they

business activities. Wāqidī, III, pp.989-90. The reverse is also possible, namely that these traders, some of whom might have been the spies of the enemy, used to carry the news of the activities of the Medinans to the Syrian people.

1. Wāqidī, II, p.755; Ibn 'Asākir, Tārīkh Madīna Dimashq (Damascus, 1951-4), VII, p.389.
2. 5 days journey from Damascus on the road to Mecca. Bakrī, IV, p.1172.
3. 'Urwa, p.205; I. Hishām, II, p.251; Wāqidī, II, p.760; I. Sa'd, II, pp.128-9; Ṭabarī, III, pp.36-7.

should not risk a battle with such a superior force. In the light of the intelligence report it was the only suitable way to avoid destruction. However, 'Abdallāh b. Rawāḥa, third in command, urged an immediate advance. His words 'victory or martyrdom' overcame all the arguments and the Muslim force advanced towards Mu'ta.⁽¹⁾

The sources have not recorded what exactly happened at Mu'ta during the battle except that 8 or 12 Muslims including three successive commanders of the Muslim force were killed and the situation became so bad that Khālīd, the fourth commander, could hardly draw off the Muslim force to a safe retreat.⁽²⁾ However, it does not require great intellectual effort to conclude that this disaster was the result of overlooking the information brought by the intelligence service of the Prophet.

'Amr b. al-'Āṣ proved himself wiser than the commanders of the previous raid when he found himself in a similar situation. He was sent out towards the Syrian border against the Banū Qudā'a and the Banū Balī with 300 soldiers,⁽³⁾ because the Prophet had come to know of a gathering of these

1. I. Hishām, II, pp.251-2; Wāqidī, II, p.760; I. Sa'd, II, p.129; Ṭabarī, III, pp.37-8; Ibn 'Asākir, op. cit., VII, pp.388-9, 394.

2. I. Hishām, II, p.254; Wāqidī, II, pp.763-4; I. Sa'd, II, p.129; Kanz, X, p.242.

3. The date for this expedition is not given by the sources but as 'Amr was the commander of this expedition and he

tribes with aggressive designs against Medina.⁽¹⁾ When he reached a watering-place called Dhāt al-Salāsīl⁽²⁾ in the country of Judhām he came to know of a large gathering of the enemy against which he found himself unable to win a battle. 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ acted like a professional commander. He stopped the march, prohibited his soldiers from lighting fires at night lest the enemy should know his whereabouts and sent Rāfi' b. Mukayth as a messenger to the Prophet informing him of this gathering and asking him for reinforcements. The Prophet acted as advised and sent Abū 'Ubayda with 200 soldiers to help 'Amr. On the arrival of Abū 'Ubayda, 'Amr marched forward and reached the place where the gathering was reported but found it deserted. He, then, continued his march until he reached the far end of the territory of the Banū Balī and the Banū 'Udhra and completely dispersed the threatening mobs.⁽³⁾

As to the intelligence aspects of this expedition, it may be mentioned that firstly the intelligence service of the Prophet managed to get wind of a gathering which had taken place

converted to Islam in Ṣafar 8 A.H. (Wāqidī, II, p.745), it must, therefore, have taken place after that.

1. The source of information might have been the earlier mentioned traders.
2. The name of a watering place in the territory of the Banū Judhām at 10 days' distance from Medina. Samhūdī, II, p.323.
3. 'Urwa, p.207; Wāqidī, II, pp.770-1; I. Sa'd, II, p.131; Maqrīzī, pp.352-3.

in a territory so far from Medina. Secondly, it warned the commander of the expedition when he was at Dhāt al-Salāsil of the large numbers of the enemy. Thirdly, it may be assumed that the enemy managed to get the news that the raiding party had requested reinforcements and also, perhaps, the despatch of Abū 'Ubayda's party from Medina. This assumption is based on the fact that their reported strength had frightened 'Amr ; therefore there was no reason why they should disperse instead of fighting a weak enemy and their decision to disperse shows that they had come to know about the reinforcements. Finally, it hardly needs stressing that 'Amr's success was due to the fact that he did not ignore the intelligence reports. Otherwise, he might have met the same fate as that of the commanders of Mu'ta.

Conquest of Mecca

In the treaty of al-Hudaybiyya the neighbouring tribes were given the freedom of being the allies of either side.⁽¹⁾ The Banū Bakr b. 'Abd Manāt declared their alliance for the Quraysh.⁽²⁾ The Banū Bakr were at odds with the Banū Khuzā'a who had killed one Bakrite and the feud had remained unresolved.⁽³⁾

1. I. Hishām, II, p.216; Wāqidī, II, p.611; Futūḥ, p.49; Ṭabarī, II, p.635.

2. I. Hishām, II, p.216; Wāqidī, II, p.612; Ṭabarī, II, p.635; Kanz, X, p.339.

3. I. Hishām, II, p.259; Ṭabarī, III, p.43.

—The Banū Khuzā'a declared their alliance for the Prophet.⁽¹⁾ Twenty two months after the treaty was signed the Banū Bakr attacked the Banū Khuzā'a to take revenge. Some members of the Quraysh were also involved in this attack. After some losses 'Amr b. Sālim and Budayl b. Warqā' of the Banū Khuzā'a managed to take the news to Medina and pleaded for assistance. The Prophet promised to help and advised the Banū Khuzā'a to scatter themselves in their valleys.⁽²⁾

When the Meccans realised the consequences of helping the Banū Bakr in their attack on Muḥammad's allies, the Banū Khuzā'a, they sent Abū Sufyān to Medina to look for a compromise. It is stated that when Abū Sufyān was on his way to Medina he met Budayl b. Warqā' who was coming back from Medina after pleading to Muḥammad to help against the Banū Bakr and their allies, the Quraysh. When Abū Sufyān asked Budayl about his activities the latter told him that he had been visiting his tribal settlements on the coast and denied having visited Medina. When Budayl went away Abū Sufyān visited the place where Budayl and his companions had halted. He found some camel dung there and broke it into pieces. He found that these contained date stones from which he concluded that Budayl was certainly coming from Medina.

Then Abū Sufyān resumed his journey and reached Medina.

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1. I. Hishām, II, p.216; Wāqidī, II, p.612; Futūḥ, p.49; Ṭabarī, II, p.635; Kanz, X, p.339.
 2. I. Hishām, II, pp.260-2; Wāqidī, II, pp.783-4, 788-9, 791; I. Sa'd, II, p.134; Futūḥ, pp.49-50; Kanz, X, p.322.

He went to see his daughter Umm Ḥabība, one of the wives of the Prophet. Umm Ḥabība drew away the rug on which he was about to seat himself, saying that it was the Prophet's rug and no impure idolator should sit upon it. After this humiliation he approached Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, Fāṭima, 'Alī and Sa'd b. 'Ubāda one by one with the request to recommend his case to the Prophet. No one of them paid heed to his request except 'Alī who advised him to call aloud that he, Abū Sufyān, took all the parties under his protection. 'Alī further told him that although such an announcement was useless for him it was the only way left for him. Abū Sufyān acted upon 'Alī's advice and returned to Mecca empty handed having no satisfactory word from the Prophet. (1)

According to the above account of his visit to Medina, Abū Sufyān met his daughter, had an audience with the Prophet and had brief talks with Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, Fāṭima, 'Alī and Sa'd b. 'Ubāda. It is not mentioned where he stayed the night and under whose protection he was at Medina. (2) It does

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1. I. Hishām, II, pp.262-3; Abū Yūsuf, Kitāb al-Kharāj (Būlāq, 1302 A.H.), p.13; Wāqidī, II, pp.785-6, 792-5; Futūḥ, p.50; Ṭabarī, III, pp.46-7; Razi, op. cit., VIII, p.539; Abu'l-Fidā, op. cit., I, p.143; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.42; Kanz, X, pp.339-40; Shiblī Nu'mānī, al-Fārūq, trans. Z.A. Khan and M. Saleem as: 'Umar the Great (Lahore, 1955-7), I, p.73.
 2. He was an envoy who apparently did not need the protection of any Medinan to perform his duties but relations between

not seem far-fetched to conclude that according to this account he performed the above mentioned job during the day and set out to Mecca some time later in the same day.

Abū Sufyān was wise enough to conclude from his meeting with Budayl, his degrading reception at Medina and the insulting behaviour of the Medinans, that an attack on Mecca had been decided on by the Prophet. He had a chance to prepare the Meccans and Ahābīsh to defend the city against the Prophet's attack but there is no trace of such efforts on the part of Abū Sufyān in the early Islamic historical accounts which suggest that Abū Sufyan had decided on something other than fighting. Wāqidī has preserved a hint of the real situation. He records that Abū Sufyān was detained at Medina and his absence from Mecca was so long that the Meccans accused him of becoming a follower of Muḥammad who had kept his conversion secret.⁽¹⁾

Mecca and Medina were far from good in this respect.

During the expedition of al-Ḥudaybiyya the Prophet's envoy Khirāsh b. Umayya was maltreated at Mecca and the safety of his life was threatened by 'Ikrima. Then the Prophet decided to send 'Umar as his envoy who refused to go to Mecca because of lack of protection. Ultimately, 'Uthmān was sent out and he managed to enter Mecca only when Abān b. Sa'īd took him under his protection. Wāqidī, II, pp. 601-2. With such a background it was unwise on the part of Abū Sufyān to enter Medina or stay there for a long time without adequate protection.

1. Wāqidī, II, p.795.

This quotation leads us to make one of two assumptions. Firstly, Abū Sufyān was actually detained at Medina. In this case there must have been some terms on which he was released. Alternatively, he remained busy in negotiations with the Prophet for such a long time that the Meccans thought that he was detained and when he returned to Mecca his attitude was such that the people thought that he had secretly gone over to Islam. In either case the traditional account of his visit to Medina seems a fabrication of our historians 'to avoid making his role (in the submission of Mecca) appear more glorious than that of al-'Abbās', as Watt has suggested⁽¹⁾, which will be discussed later on.

However, the Prophet, after the visit of Abū Sufyān to Medina, started his preparations for a grand attack on Mecca and summoned his allies from the Bedouin tribes but kept his destination secret, even from his closest companions, as long as possible.⁽²⁾ He sealed off all the roads to Mecca and put 'Umar in charge of this blockade.⁽³⁾ An attempt was made to inform the Meccans by Ḥātib but, as mentioned earlier,⁽⁴⁾ the woman who was carrying the letter to Mecca was intercepted.

In the meantime, the Prophet sent Abū Qatāda with some other soldiers to Baṭn Adam⁽⁵⁾ to mislead the possible enemy

1. Watt, Medina, p.64.

2. I. Hishām, II, p.264; Wāqidī, II, pp.796, 802-3.

3. Abū Yūsuf, op. cit., p.131; Wāqidī, II, pp.787, 796.

4. See above, pp.78-9.

5. At a distance of 3 burds from Medina. I. Sa'd, II, p.133.

agents in Medina about his real destination.⁽¹⁾ This step of the Prophet proved to be very successful, as until the last stages of his journey to Mecca the majority of his companions did not know whether he was going to attack Mecca or the Banū Hawāzin.⁽²⁾ Moreover, it is stated that the Banū Hawāzin had procured information about his march from Medina, in spite of the blockade of the roads to Mecca, but they could not know his real intention and thought that he was, perhaps, heading towards them.⁽³⁾

On the 10th of Ramaḍān 8 A.H. the Prophet left Medina and set out for Mecca with 10,000 soldiers.⁽⁴⁾ From 'Araḥ he sent some cavalrymen in advance who captured a spy of the Banū Hawāzin and brought him to the Prophet who put him under guard after investigation.⁽⁵⁾ Then the Prophet resumed his journey

1. I. Sa'd, II, p.133.

2. Wāqidī, II, p.802; Ṭabarī, III, p.51.

3. Ṭabarī, III, p.70.

4. I. Hishām, II, p.265; Wāqidī, II, p.801.

5. Wāqidī, II, pp.804-6; Maqrīzī, p.366. The captors of the spy told the Prophet that he was playing hide and seek with them until they captured him. Then, when they asked him who he was, he said that he belonged to the Banū Ghifār. They asked him to which section of the Banū Ghifār he belonged but his answer was not satisfactory. Then they asked him where his family was but his answer again was unsatisfactory. Therefore they became suspicious of him and threatened to kill him. After being threatened he said

and reached Marr al-Ẓahrān⁽¹⁾ where he pitched his camp keeping the Quraysh completely unaware of the situation.⁽²⁾

It is stated that the Meccans were expecting an attack upon them from the Medinans but that they were unaware of what was going on in the city of their enemies. In this state of curiosity they sent out Abū Sufyān along with Ḥakīm b. Hizām and Budayl b. Warqā' on a spying mission in order to get some information about the enemy. This was the time when the Prophet

that he belonged to the Banū Hawāzin and had been sent out towards Medina on a spying mission. Upon this confession, as the captors said to the Prophet, they had brought the spy to him. The Prophet asked the spy where the Banū Hawāzin were. He said that he had left them at Baq'ā (according to Samhūdī, II, p.264, this place is 24 miles from Medina, therefore something was obviously wrong) where they had gathered in large numbers and had invited the Banū Thaqīf to join them and they had accepted the invitation. The Prophet, then, asked him who the leader of the gathering was. The spy told the Prophet that Mālīk b. 'Awf was the commander of their forces. He further said that he passed through Mecca and found the Meccans angry with Abū Sufyān because of the failure of his mission at Medina and they were afraid of the consequences.

1. A place at a distance of 16 or 18 miles from Mecca. Bakrī, IV, p.1212.
2. 'Urwa, p.209; I. Hishām, II, p.265; Wāqidī, II, p.814.

was at Marr al-Zahrān on his way to Mecca and al-‘Abbās, who had recently joined the Prophet's army, was searching for someone outside the Muslim camp through whom he could send a message to the Meccans to surrender their city in order to avoid bloodshed. Al-‘Abbās met Abū Sufyān quite accidentally and persuaded him to surrender and took him to the Prophet under his protection. On the way, ‘Umar saw Abū Sufyān and drew his sword to kill the enemy of God but al-‘Abbās saved him and hurried to the Prophet's tent. The Prophet told his uncle to take Abū Sufyān to his tent and to present him the following day. In the morning he was presented to the Prophet who asked him, "Have you not yet discovered that there is no God but one." Abū Sufyān replied, "If there had been any he would have helped me." Then the Prophet asked him, "Has not the time come to acknowledge that I am the Prophet of God." "There is still some doubt in my mind about this matter" replied Abū Sufyān. Al-‘Abbās urged him to acknowledge the prophethood of Muḥammad otherwise his life would be in danger. Abū Sufyān, finding no alternative, accepted Islam and managed to save his life. Then the Prophet, on the suggestion of al-‘Abbās, granted him the privilege that at the time of the attack on Mecca "Whoever enters the house of Abū Sufyān shall be secure". Then Abū Sufyān saw the march past of the Prophet's forces and went to Mecca where he advised the Meccans to surrender because Muḥammad had come to them with a force that none could withstand. His wife Hind seized his moustaches and advised the Meccans to kill him but

they dispersed to their houses and the mosque.⁽¹⁾

The above account of Abū Sufyān's visit to Marra al-Zahrān seems baseless because of the following reasons.

1. One of the companions of Abū Sufyān is said to have been Budayl b. Warqā', a leader of the Banū Khuzā'a, who had taken the news of the misfortune of his tribe caused by the Quraysh to Muḥammad with a request for help, being his ally.⁽²⁾ It is unlikely that Budayl was spying along with Abū Sufyān for the Meccans against an army who had come to answer his pleas against Abū Sufyān's tribe.

2. 'Umar has been described as very keen to kill Abū Sufyān

1. I. Hishām, II, pp.265-8; Wāqidī, II, pp.814-8; Ṭabarī, III, pp.52-4; Aghānī, VI, p.352; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.43; Maqrīzī, pp.368-72; S. Nu'mānī, op. cit., I, pp.73-4; Abū Zahra, op. cit., II, p.1196. Al-Balādhurī's version of this event is slightly different. He says that the Quraysh had asked Abū Sufyān to return (to Medina for further negotiations after the failure of his previous mission). When he got near to Marr al-Zahrān he saw the fires and tents and wondered at the phenomenon. Then all of a sudden he was surrounded by the Prophet's horsemen who captured him and took him to the Prophet where 'Umar wanted to execute him but al-'Abbās saved his life.

Futūḥ, pp.50-1.

2. See above, p.189.

because fate had brought him alone to the Muslim camp but it was al-'Abbās who managed to keep 'Umar away from Abū Sufyān. If it is true, then the question naturally arises why 'Umar did not try to kill Abū Sufyān when the latter had visited Medina a few weeks earlier without the protection of al-'Abbās.

3. When Abū Sufyān was presented to the Prophet, al-'Abbās is said to have urged him to accept the prophethood of Muḥammad to save his life. If the situation was such, then where was the promised protection of a respectable Hāshimite, al-'Abbās? Moreover, the question arises as to whether the Prophet was ready to violate the protection of his uncle, whereas he had honoured, at an earlier stage, the protection of his daughter, Zaynab, to her husband Abu'l-'Āṣ b. al-Rabī'.⁽¹⁾

In the light of the above discussion nothing seems certain concerning the visit of Abū Sufyān to Marr al-Zahrān as well as his visit to Medina as discussed earlier⁽²⁾ and the matter, thus, is open for making assumptions. It may be suggested that Abū Sufyān submitted to Muḥammad while he was still at Medina or at some later stage before the submission of Mecca took place. The Prophet seems to have taken him into his confidence about his projected plan of attack on Mecca. After his return to Mecca Abū Sufyān seems to have been working to prepare his fellow citizens for submission which made them realise that he secretly had gone over to Islam. But as there was no hope of winning a battle against Muḥammad in a situation when Abū Sufyān was advocating submission, therefore the Meccans

1. Wāqidī, II, p.553; I. Sa'd, II, p.87.

2. See above, pp.191-2.

decided to open the doors of their city to avoid useless bloodshed. This assumption is not altogether baseless because some sources record that the Meccans had advised Abū Sufyān to go to the Prophet and seek protection for them.⁽¹⁾ According to this assumption Abū Sufyān was aware of the timetable of the Prophet's march, therefore he, along with Budayl and Ḥakīm, went to see the Prophet at Marr al-Zahrān and reported the latest situation, as 'Urwa states that Budayl and Ḥakīm informed the Prophet about the situation at Mecca.⁽²⁾ That is why the Prophet's march from Marr al-Zahrān onwards is presented as a victory parade. According to this assumption the Prophet appears to have fought a psychological war against Abū Sufyān and the Meccans which is a part of intelligence work. As Fitzgibbon, while discussing different kinds of intelligence activities, writes,

"'Psychological warfare' is a messy phrase, of many ingredients. Its basic purpose is to persuade the enemy, soldiers, civilians and even governments, first that they should not win or even fight a war, and when this is impossible, as is almost always the case that they can not win the war, that its continuation is a mere waste of life and treasure, and that therefore immediate surrender is desirable." (3)

Here is not the place to give an account of the Prophet's victory parade from Marr al-Zahrān onwards and his entry into

1. I. Sa'd, II, p.135; Maqrīzī, p.368.

2. 'Urwa, p.210.

3. C. Fitzgibbon, Secret Intelligence in the Twentieth Century (London, 1976), p.50.

Mecca. Suffice it to say that the Prophet's success in buying off Abū Sufyān to his side which is a part of espionage work and his counter-intelligence activities which had denied the Meccans an access to the information about his activities until he reached Marr al-Zahrān had left no choice for the Meccans other than to open the doors of their city for the Prophet.⁽¹⁾

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1. Three years earlier, when the allied forces had besieged Medina with 10,000 soldiers, as it is reported, the Meccans share was 4,000 which included themselves and their closest allies, Ahābīsh. Wāqidī, II, p.443; I. Sa'd, II, p.66. Three years had passed since then and a considerable number of them had gone over to Islam, including some of their best soldiers such as Khālīd b. al-Walīd and 'Amr b. al-'Ās. With the present force which may be estimated at around 3,000 it was impossible to defend the city against a force of 10,000 without any previous preparations. The Prophet had defended Medina with 3,000 soldiers against a 10,000 strong enemy but he had dug a trench around the city which had taken 6 days to make. In the present situation there was not even a single day left for such an effort. To look to their allies was also useless because their main allies, the Banū Ghatafān and the Banū Sulaym, who had contributed 2,500 soldiers to the alliance which had besieged Medina (Wāqidī, II, p.443; I. Sa'd, II, p.66) were now in the Prophet's

Battle of Hunayn

As mentioned earlier, the Prophet had come to know through the agency of a captured spy, of a gathering of the Banū Hawāzin and the Banū Thaqīf with aggressive designs against him while he was on his way to Mecca.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, soon after the conquest of Mecca the Prophet turned towards them. He sent 'Abdallāh b. Abī Ḥadrad to them and directed him to enter their camp in order to learn all about them. He managed to do this and stayed with those tribes until he learnt that they had decided to fight the Prophet and until he found out the strategy which they were going to adopt in the battle with the Prophet. Then he, 'Abdallāh, came back and told the Prophet what he had seen and heard in the enemy camp.⁽²⁾

army (Wāqidī, II, pp.799, 803, 812; I. Sa'd, II, pp.134-5; Ṭabarī, III, pp.51-2) and the Jews of Khaybar, another possible source of help were now among the Prophet's subjects. Besides these groups, if they had any other allies it was impossible to approach them and then to bring them to Mecca for help in less than 24 hours' time because the Prophet was knocking at their door.

1. See above, pp.193-4. Another source of information about the activities of the Banū Hawāzin, Anas b. Abī Marthad, has been mentioned earlier, although the present author could not find anywhere what role he played in informing the Prophet about the gathering and the intentions of the Banū Hawāzin.
2. 'Urwa, p.214; I. Hishām, II, p.290; Wāqidī, II, p.893; I. Sa'd, II, p.150; Ṭabarī, III, pp.72-3; I. Khaldūn, II(2), p.46; Maqrīzī, p.404.

The Prophet reached Hunayn⁽¹⁾ on the 10th of Shawwāl 8 A.H. at the head of an army 12,000 strong.⁽²⁾ Two thousand Meccans had joined with his original force of ten thousand men to fight the Banū Hawāzin and the Banū Thaqīf.⁽³⁾ Mālīk b. 'Awf, the enemy commander, sent three spies to the Prophet's camp and directed them to disperse in the camp in order to obtain detailed information about the strength and the plans of Muḥammad's force. They returned unsuccessful with their joints dislocated, perhaps by being beaten by the Prophet's guards. Mālīk, then, sent another spy but this too met the same fate.⁽⁴⁾ One more enemy spy is reported to have entered the Muslim camp but he was captured and detained by the Prophet.⁽⁵⁾

It is stated that Mālīk had posted his cavalry and archers in the side valleys and upon hilltops surrounding the narrow passage through which the Muslim force had to pass.⁽⁶⁾ When the Prophet's army started its onward march, its vanguard was

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1. A place between Mecca and al-Ṭā'if at a distance of some 10 miles from Mecca. Bakrī, II, p.471.
 2. I. Hishām, II, p.290; Wāqidī, III, p.889; Ṭabarī, III, p.73; Ṭabarī, Taf., X, p.62.
 3. I. Hishām, II, p.290; Wāqidī, III, p.889; Ṭabarī, III, p.73; Ṭabarī, Taf., X, p.62.
 4. I. Hishām, II, p.290, Wāqidī, III, pp.892-3; Ṭabarī, III, p.72; Kāmil, II, p.200; Maqrīzī, p.404.
 5. Wāqidī, III, p.892.
 6. I. Hishām, II, p.292; Wāqidī, III, pp.895, 897; Ṭabarī, III, p.74.

taken by surprise and it scattered in panic as it was attacked from hidden posts. This action of the panic-stricken vanguard affected the whole army and the Prophet was left to face the enemy with a very small body of his companions. He and his uncle al-'Abbās, then, shouted at the tops of their voices to call the fleeing Muslims back. It is stated that when they listened to their call the Muslims returned to fight.⁽¹⁾ This turned the tide and the enemy flew away leaving 24,000 camels, 40,000 sheep and goats and 6,000 prisoners as booty for the Muslims.⁽²⁾ The Prophet, then, went forward in pursuit of the Banū Thaqīf who had entered their city al-Ṭā'if. The Prophet besieged the city but after some fruitless efforts to storm it he raised the siege and returned to al-Ji'rāna⁽³⁾ to distribute the booty among his soldiers.⁽⁴⁾

Here are a few remarks on the intelligence aspects of this battle which was fought between, perhaps, the largest

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1. I. Hishām, II, p.293; Wāqidī, III, pp.897-900; Musnad, III, p.209; al-Jāḥiẓ, al-Bayān wa'l-Tabyīn, ed. M. al-Sandūbī (Cairo, 1932), I, p.115; Muslim, III, p.156; Ṭabarī, III, p.75; Ṭabarī, Taf., X, p.63; al-Bayḍāwī, Anwār al-Tanzīl, (Cairo, 1330 A.H.), III, p.64; Maqrīzī, pp.406-7; Khafājī, Nasīm al-Riyād (Cairo, 1325-7), II, pp.45-9.
 2. Wāqidī, III, p.943.
 3. 10 miles from Mecca. Wāqidī, III, p.939.
 4. I. Hishām, II, p.317; Wāqidī, III, pp.922-37.

armies the Arabs had seen so far, 12,000 on one side and approximately its double on the other.⁽¹⁾ The Banū Hawāzin seem to have been well aware of the importance of intelligence, because at least 7 of their spies, a party of 3 sent by Mālik, then another one sent by him, one more reported to be detained in the Prophet's camp, one that was captured by the Prophet's cavalrymen when he was on his way to Mecca and the one unmentioned spy who originally took the news to his tribe of the Prophet's march from Medina, meet the eyes of the reader during this event. Most of these spies proved themselves up to the mark because in spite of the torture which had dislocated their joints they did not reveal the strategy which their commander was going to adopt in the battle. If one examines this event along with the expedition sent to Turaba one finds that the Banū Hawāzin had a good information service according to the standards of seventh century Arabia.

On the other hand, the Prophet was also aware of military intelligence but at that moment he seems to have become overconfident because of the unprecedentedly large force under his command.⁽²⁾ This rendered him careless. The sources, mentioned earlier,⁽³⁾ record only one spy, 'Abdallāh, sent out by him who could not find out the war plan of the enemy and 'Umar is

1. Wāqidī, III, p.893.

2. I. Hishām, II, p.293; Wāqidī, III, p.890; Abū Dā'ūd, op. cit., III, p.14; Ṭabarī, Taf., X, p.61; al-Baydāwī, op. cit., III, p.64.

3. See above, p.200 f.n.2.

even reported to have told the Prophet that 'Abdallāh was telling lies.⁽¹⁾ However, the Prophet paid the price of his carelessness later during the battle.

One new development in the intelligence work, however, has been reported in the accounts of this battle. We have seen on a number of occasions that the Prophet or his commanders captured the enemy spies and either put them under guard or killed them after interrogation but the present event is the first occasion when the enemy spies were set free and sent back to their camp after being tortured. This was done, perhaps, because of two reasons. Firstly, because the Prophet imagined that the appearance of the spies in the enemy camp with their joints dislocated would frighten the enemy. Secondly, the Prophet hoped that these spies would tell the enemy about the large numbers of the Muslim force. By this step the Prophet wanted to frighten and demoralise the enemy, which is a part of intelligence work. Mālīk, the enemy commander, however, seems to have understood the reasons mentioned above because he put his spies under guard⁽²⁾ to save his army from the effects which the Prophet had foreseen.

1. I. Hishām, II, p.290; Wāqidī, III, p.893; Ṭabarī, III, p.73.

As the news of the gathering of the Banū Hawāzin was already known to the Prophet and the purpose of sending this spy was to spy out their plan and 'Abdallāh's report, as discussed earlier, did not include the strategy which the Banū Hawāzin followed later in the battle, therefore 'Umar seems to be right in refuting 'Abdallāh b. Abī Ḥadrad.

2. Wāqidī, III, p.892; Maqrīzī, p.404.

From Hunayn Until the Prophet's Death

In Ṣafar 9 A.H. the Prophet sent Qutba b. 'Āmir with 20 riders to a clan of the Banū Khath'am near Tabāla.⁽¹⁾ The party travelled by night concealing their arms. When they reached Baṭn Maṣhā,⁽²⁾ they came across a traveller. When they questioned him he pretended to be dumb and started to utter loud noises to alert those people in the area of his whereabouts.⁽³⁾ The party killed him and, then, at night sent out one of their number as a spy to locate the enemy. The spy came back after a short while and told them that he had seen a herd belonging to the enemy nearby. The party then crawled forward for fear of the guards of the herd until they safely reached the vicinity of the enemy gathering and their herd without being noticed. Then they fell suddenly upon the enemy while they were asleep and succeeded in capturing a large amount of booty.⁽⁴⁾

This expedition is remarkable for its intelligence aspects. Firstly, the party travelled by night concealing their arms as a counter intelligence measure so that nobody could find out

1. A place near al-Ṭā'if on the road to Yemen from Mecca.

Bakrī, I, p.301.

2. The name of a place in Sarif. Bakrī, IV, p.1224, while Sarif is 6 or 7 or 9 or 12 miles from Mecca on the road to Marr al-Zahrān. Bakrī, III, p.735.

3. (فجعل يبيع بالحاضر) Wāqidī, II, p.755; I. Sa'd, (فجعل يبيع بالحاضر ويحذرهم) II, p.162; Maqrīzī, p.440.

4. Wāqidī, II, pp.754-5; III, p.981; Maqrīzī, p.440.

the nature of their mission. Secondly, the captured traveller pretended to be dumb and in this way practically refused to say anything about himself but at the same time he tried to act as a warner by uttering loud noises. He may have been really dumb but his noise revealed his mission and the Muslim party put him to death to safeguard their own secrets because if they had let him go he would surely have taken the news of the party to the enemy and if they had kept him under guard there was no guarantee that he would not shout again. Thirdly, the party sent a spy who came back after completing his mission successfully. Lastly, the party managed to surprise the enemy by adopting a method, crawling, as a counter intelligence measure which has never been mentioned so far in the accounts of the expeditions undertaken during the Prophet's career at Medina.

In Rabī' al-Ākhīr 9 A.H. the Prophet sent 'Alī with 150 soldiers to the territory of the Banū Tayy to destroy their idol called Fuls. It is stated that 'Adī b. Ḥāṭim, a leader of the Banū Tayy, had his spy at Medina who reported to him about the forthcoming attack. 'Adī, therefore, left his territory and fled to Syria. 'Alī, however, travelled under the guidance of Ḥurayth of the Banū Asad on the road to Fayḍ. When the party reached a place which was a night's distance from the enemy camp, as it seems that only 'Adī had fled to Syria and the rest of his tribe was still in their territory, Ḥurayth advised 'Alī to stop the march during the day and to proceed on at night so that in the early morning they would take the enemy by surprise and if someone ran away it would be easier to chase him in the daylight. 'Alī accepted his advice

and stopped the march. Then he sent three of his soldiers to reconnoitre the territory. These soldiers brought a slave with them on their return and told 'Alī that when they came across him and asked about his activities he told them that he was pursuing his desire (atlubu bughyatī).⁽¹⁾ When 'Alī forced him to speak the truth he said that he was a slave of a man of the Banū Tayy and was sent out to inform them beforehand if he noticed Muḥammad's force. He further said that when he saw them, the Muslim party, for the first time he thought of going back to his tribe to inform them but then decided to remain in the vicinity until he could know their strength to give his tribe a comprehensive report but was captured in the pursuit of this goal. 'Alī, then, asked him about the whereabouts of his tribe and he said that they were at a night's distance.

'Alī, then, marched forward along with his party and took the slave with him to lead the way. They travelled all night but could not reach the enemy 'who was reported to be at a night's distance'. The slave, then told the Muslim party that he had made a mistake and had left the right path behind. Then he took the party a mile or so back and again said that he had made a mistake. 'Alī, naturally, became suspicious of him and threatened to kill him. The threat worked and the slave then took the Muslim party to the enemy. The party, then, attacked the enemy and captured a large amount of booty. Then 'Alī, along with his party, reached the sanctuary of the idol, Fuls,

1. اُطْلُبُ بَغْيَتِي Wāqidī, III, p.985.

and destroyed it.⁽¹⁾

This is another noteworthy expedition because of its intelligence aspects. Firstly, it provides evidence of the fact that the Banū Tayy, a tribe living very far from Medina, had posted a spy at Medina, presumably in the guise of a Muslim, to get information about the Prophet's activities against them. Secondly, this spy was so efficient that he managed to convey the news of the despatch before the Muslim party reached their territory. Thirdly, the Banū Tayy sent a warner to patrol the outskirts of their territory in order to get an early warning of the advancing party so that they could prepare for a battle if stronger than the raiding party or get themselves scattered if weaker than the raiders. Fourthly, the raiding party took precautions as counter intelligence when it decided not to travel during the day to keep the enemy unaware of their presence nearby and then captured an enemy spy, an action by which they not only came to know the whereabouts of the enemy camp but also managed to keep the enemy in the dark about their own presence nearby. Lastly, the slave proved himself experienced in intelligence work because he tried his best to mislead the Muslim force and took them in a wrong direction in the hope that either the raiders would think that the Banū Tayy had changed their camping place or that his tribe might conclude from his failure to report back that the Muslim party was nearby who had captured their spy and therefore, as he might have hoped, would get themselves

1. Wāqidī, III, pp.984-8.

scattered.

The last expedition led by the Prophet was his raid on Tabūk⁽¹⁾ in Rajab 9 A.H. The reason assigned to this expedition was the news from Syria brought by the earlier mentioned traders that the Byzantine government had mobilized a great army to attack Medina and that the Syrian Arab tribes, Lakhm, Judhām and Ghassān, had also rallied under their banner. The Prophet, after energetic preparations, reached Tabūk with 30,000 soldiers but there was nobody to fight with and the news of the enemy gathering proved to be a rumour. Then after a short stay at Tabūk the Prophet returned to Medina.⁽²⁾

If one examines the three expeditions directed against or sent into the Byzantine territory, Syria, namely, the expedition which was led by Ka'b b. 'Umayr,⁽³⁾ the expedition to Mu'ta⁽⁴⁾ and the present expedition, Tabūk, one finds that the Byzantine espionage system was superior and more effective than that of the Prophet. As in the cases of the previous two expeditions the Byzantine espionage system managed to procure information about the advancing Muslim parties, while on the other hand the Prophet's intelligence service could not take effective steps to surprise the enemy.

The expedition of Tabūk is a fine example of the superiority

1. 12 stations from Medina. Samhūdī, II, p.269.

2. I. Hishām, II, pp.331-42; Wāqidī, III, pp.989-91; I. Sa'd, II, pp.65-7; Ṭabarī, III, pp.100-101; I. Jawzī, p.707.

3. See above, p.183.

4. See above, pp.185-6.

of the Byzantine intelligence service as it spread a false rumour about the plans of the Byzantine government to attack Medina, which is a part of espionage work, and created a panic in the Prophet's city. The sources abound with the details of the Prophet's preparations and his problems in raising enough force to meet the threat. The Byzantine government must have been exulting in the miseries of the Prophet created by their intelligence service. The Muslim intelligence service, on the other hand, could not find out the real situation until the Prophet himself reached Tabūk and discovered that the news with which he was furnished was a false rumour.

The last expedition ordered by the Prophet to be undertaken was the expedition of Usāma b. Zayd in Ṣafar 11 A.H. towards Mu'ta to take revenge for the killing of the latter's father. The expedition, however, was not undertaken during the lifetime of the Prophet because a couple of weeks later the Prophet died. The advice he gave to Usāma is, however, worth mentioning because it was the essence of his ten years' experience of warfare. He is said to have advised Usāma, "Take with you guides and send spies in advance".⁽¹⁾

As the above advice was given to the commander of the last expedition ordered by the Prophet during the last days of the Prophet's life therefore here is the place to say that the Prophet managed to start his career at Medina with the help of

1. خذ معك الادلاء و قدم العيون امامك
والطلائع Wāqidī, III, p.1117;
I. Sa'd, II, خذ معك الادلاء و قدم العيون و
الطلائع امامك
Maqrīzī, p.536;
p.190.

espionage⁽¹⁾ and ended his career, at Medina, stressing the need of espionage.

Internal front

On the internal front there were the Muhājirūn, the Anṣār, the Munāfiqūn and the Jews with whom the Prophet had to deal. As for the first two groups, they were his followers and although some of them indulged in unworthy activities, as mentioned earlier,⁽²⁾ the majority of them stood by him through thick and thin. Therefore, the main source of worry for the Prophet were the Munāfiqūn and the Jews who had adopted a hostile attitude towards him.

The Munāfiqūn had no separate quarters or compact settlements which could provide them with a secure base for their activities against the Prophet. Therefore their activities remained limited to criticising the new faith, spying on the Prophet and encouraging the Jews in their activities against the Prophet. The Prophet dealt with them very patiently and generally he tried to avoid the use of force against them for fear that it might provoke their relatives among the Anṣār. Another reason for avoiding the use of force against them was the Prophet's fear that people would think that he treated his companions harshly, as the Munāfiqūn, after all, were counted among his companions, and it would end the influx of newcomers to his ranks.

1. See the section which deals with the hijra.

2. See above, pp. 78-85.

As for the Jews of Medina they were a different sort of opponent for the Prophet. The Prophet, therefore, adopted a different policy towards them. Their numbers ran into thousands and they had compact settlements in the oasis of Medina which provided them with a concrete base to execute their plans against the Prophet. Generally they did not try to hide their hostile activities towards him but whenever they tried to do so the espionage system of the Prophet got wind of it and the Prophet responded with full force.

As the activities of the Munāfiqūn and the Jews of Medina against the Prophet are inter-related therefore it seems appropriate to mention them together in what is generally accepted to be a chronological order.

During the period preceding the battle of Badr the internal front seems quiet and calm and the parties seem to have been weighing one another up for their future behaviour towards each other.⁽¹⁾

When the battle of Badr was over the Munāfiqūn spread the news of the Prophet's defeat and his killing along with his close companions. This action of the Munāfiqūn was a sort of propaganda war to demoralise the family members of those Muslims who had gone to Badr. Wāqidī states that the Jews of Medina

1. A letter from some of the Meccan leaders may be mentioned which was sent to Ibn Ubayy and his party asking them to expel the Prophet from Medina. Usūl, VIII, pp.218-9; M. Ḥamīdullāh, Wathā'iq (Beirut, 1969), pp.50-1. It is not mentioned, however, what action Ibn Ubayy took when he received this letter.

were also taking part in such propaganda⁽¹⁾ which is after all a part of espionage work. Usāma b. Zayd reported to the authorities⁽²⁾ but the Prophet did not take any step against them because, as the Prophet might have thought, his, the Prophet's, presence at Medina along with a number of prisoners taken at Badr seemed enough to refute the claims of adversaries.

A few weeks after the battle of Badr, Abū Sufyān made a raid on the outskirts of Medina, as mentioned earlier,⁽³⁾ and Sallām b. Mishkam of the Banū al-Nadīr furnished him with secret information about the situation at Medina. Afterwards Abū Sufyān is said to have composed verses about this event and made his secret meeting with Sallām known to all.⁽⁴⁾ As the poets of those times were the journalists of the day the poems were the newspapers. The Prophet picked up this information which is a part of espionage work⁽⁵⁾ but did not take immediate steps against Sallām or the Banū al-Nadīr and waited for a suitable moment.

1. Wāqidī, I, p.115.

2. Ibid., p.115.

3. See above, p.137.

4. I. Hishām, II, p.55; Wāqidī, I, p.182.

5. See R.S. Cline, Secrets, Spies and Scholars (Washington, 1976), p.7, who writes that,

"Intelligence on foreign affairs includes such additional categories as press reports, foreign radio broadcast, foreign publications and - in the Government - reports from our Foreign Service officers and military attaches."

Ka'b. b. Ashraf, a Jewish leader and a poet, went to Mecca after the battle of Badr where he recited his poems to incite the Quraysh to take revenge for their kinsmen slain at Badr.⁽¹⁾ The Prophet again picked up information from the journals of the day and when Ka'b returned to Medina he sent his secret agents to assassinate Ka'b who performed their duty successfully.⁽²⁾

It is stated that the Banū al-Nadīr co-operated with the Meccans when the latter came to fight with the Prophet in the battle of Uhud and helped the latter, providing them with secret information about the Muslims.⁽³⁾

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1. 'Urwa, p.162; I. Hishām, II, pp.58-9; Wāqidī, I, p.185; I. Sa'd, II, p.32; Ṭabarī, II, p.488.
 2. 'Urwa, p.162; I. Hishām, II, pp.60-2; Wāqidī, I, pp.187-90; I. Sa'd, II, pp.32-3; Muslim, III, pp.172-3; Ṭabarī, II, pp.490-1; al-Rāzī, Mafātīḥ al-Ghayb (Cairo, 1307 A.H.), VIII, p.125; Usūl, VIII, pp.225-7; al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., I, pp.527-8. Kister, however, suggests another reason for the bitterness of relations between the Prophet and Ka'b which resulted in the assassination of the latter. He says that the Prophet wanted to establish a market on a piece of land which belonged to Ka'b but the latter tried to prevent him from doing so. "The Market of the Prophet", JESHO, VIII (1965), p.274. Kister further says that,
"Ka'b considered the establishment of the new market as competition to the existing one of the Banū Qaynuqā'". Ibid., p.276.
 3. 'Urwa, p.164.

Later on when the Prophet visited their quarters to discuss certain matters they are said to have formed a plot to assassinate the Prophet. The latter, however, came to know of this plot and left the premises.⁽¹⁾

This plot is said to have been the reason for his forcing them into exile. To the present author the act of Sallām b. Mishkam, mentioned earlier,⁽²⁾ and the information on the Prophet's activities during the battle of Uhud seem more appropriate reasons for the decision to exile them because the Prophet had, probably, come to the conclusion that as long as the Banū al-Nadīr were there at Medina they would serve as a source of secret information to the Meccans on his activities.

When the Prophet left for Uhud, Ibn Ubayy stayed behind with one-third of the Prophet's original force⁽³⁾ and the battle resulted in the victory of the Meccans but the latter did not storm Medina. One of the reasons why the Meccans did not press home their advantage in Medina was, as 'Amr b. al-'Ās is reported to have said,⁽⁴⁾ that they had heard that Ibn Ubayy was in Medina with one-third of the Muslim force. This statement leads us to make an assumption, namely, that the

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1. 'Urwa, pp.164-5; I. Hishām, II, p.142; I. Sa'd, II, p.57; Futūḥ, p.31; al-Suyūṭī, op. cit., I, p.525; Maqrīzī, p.178.
 2. See above, p.137.
 3. I. Hishām, II, p.67.
 4. Wāqidī, I, p.299; J. Gould, "A Study of Two Rivalries in the Umma (1-11 A.H.)", unpublished Ph.D. Thesis (University of Edinburgh, 1975-6), p.62.

Prophet had spread the news that Ibn Ubayy was at Medina with his consent to serve as a reserve and to defend the city in case of danger. Such propaganda is a part of espionage work.

During the expedition of the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq the activities of Ibn Ubayy came to the notice of the Prophet through Zayd b. Arqam as mentioned earlier.⁽¹⁾ It is stated that 'Umar advised the Prophet to send 'Ubād b. Bashr to kill Ibn Ubayy but the Prophet refused to accept this advice saying that people would say that Muḥammad was killing his own companions.⁽²⁾

During the siege of Medina the Banū Qurayẓa had secretly joined the ranks of the allied forces and the Prophet had come to know about this fact through his intelligence service, as mentioned earlier.⁽³⁾ When the allied forces left for home the Prophet laid a siege on the Banū Qurayẓa and forced them to surrender. It is stated that on Sa'd's decree the Prophet put all their fighting men to death and sold their women and children into slavery.⁽⁴⁾

1. See above, p.98.

2. I. Hishām, II, pp.199-200; Wāqidī, II, p.418.

3. See above, p.156.

4. 'Urwa, p.188; I. Hishām, II, pp.170-1; Wāqidī, II, p.497, 509-10; 512-3; I. Sa'd, II, pp.77-8; al-Dārimī, Sunan (Beirut, 1398 A.H.), II, p.238; Futūḥ, p.36; Ṭabarī, II, pp.587-8; Ṭabarī, Taf., XXI, p.89; Mishkāṭ, II, pp.389-90; Maqrīzī, pp.246-7; Amir Ali, The Spirit of Islam (London, 1965), p.82; Watt, "The Condemnation of the Jews of Banū Quraysh", MW, XLII (1952), p.171. Amīr 'Alī maintains

The execution of the Banū Qurayẓa seems to have marked the end of the Jewish influence at Medina because the Jews who still remained there could no longer pose any threat to Muḥammad's growing influence but the Munāfiqūn were still there busy with their usual activities. When the Prophet started preparations for the expedition to Tabūk a number of the Munāfiqūn decided to stay behind and persuaded others who wanted to accompany the Prophet to do so too.⁽¹⁾ One such Munāfiq was Julās b. Suwayd. His activities were reported to the Prophet by his own step son 'Umayr b. Sa'īd. The Prophet summoned Julās and asked for an explanation. He denied having taken part in such activities and later apologized and is said to have become a good Muslim.⁽²⁾

When the Prophet was on his way back to Medina from Tabūk a party of the Munāfiqūn who were among the Prophet's cavalcade plotted to assassinate him and chose a narrow path over which the Prophet had to pass at night to execute their

that the numbers of the Jews who were executed were between 200 and 250. 'Arafāt, however, rejects the story of the mass execution of the Banū Qurayẓa and seems to hold the opinion that only a few of them, their leaders and the guilty ones, were put to death. "New Light on the Story of Banū Qurayẓa and the Jews of Medina", JRAS (1976), pp.100-107.

1. I. Hishām, II, p.337.
2. Wāqidī, III, pp.992-3, 995, 1003, 1005.

plan. The Prophet was informed of this plot and advised 'Ammār b. Yāsir and Hudhayfa b. al-Yamān to escort him through that narrow path. When the plotters tried to carry out the attack they were intercepted by the guards and dispersed in the dark. In the morning the Prophet told Usayd b. Hudayr about this incident. The latter advised him to locate such persons and get them executed by their own relatives. The Prophet did not agree with him and said that the people would say that the Prophet had killed his own companions after having their assistance in the battle against his enemies.⁽¹⁾

Although the name of the informant is not recorded, there can be no doubt that it was the intelligence service of the Prophet who got wind of this plan and gave him a timely warning and the Prophet eventually managed to save his life by taking appropriate steps.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed the Prophet's activities in the field of espionage in detail. Our analysis leads us to conclude that espionage played a major role in the success of the Prophet against so many odds. It has been mentioned that he managed to find and reach a comparatively secure place to accomplish his mission with the help of Muṣ'ab b. 'Umayr and 'Abdallāh b. Abī Bakr, his spies at Medina and Mecca respectively. Then he succeeded in blocking the caravan route of the Quraysh to Syria by attacking their caravans on the basis

1. Wāqidī, III, pp.1042-4.

of information received through his spies. He won the battle of Badr mainly by the help of his intelligence activities when he came to know the presence of the enemy nearby and blocked up all the wells except the one around which he stationed his own force. He managed to save his city from a grand attack of the joint forces of the Meccans, the Bedouin Arab tribes and the Jews by the help of espionage when he came to know their march beforehand, dug a trench around his city and then forestalled the hostile moves of the Banū Qurayza and saved himself from being boxed in. Then he broke up the enemy gathering by sowing the seeds of disaffection among different sections of the enemy through his secret agent Nu'aym b. Mas'ūd. The treaty of al-Hudaybiyya, through which the Prophet was recognised as an equal to the Quraysh rather than a runaway, could be concluded only because of the successful espionage activities of Busr b. Sufyān. Then the conquest of Mecca was due, mainly, to the psychological victory over Abū Sufyān and the counter intelligence activities of the Prophet because he had blocked all the roads to Mecca and thus had denied the Meccans a chance of getting early warning of his proposed attack.

He overpowered the Bedouin Arab tribes because his information service managed to forestall many of their hostile moves and he succeeded in breaking up their gatherings without suffering any loss such as in the cases of the Banū Maḥārīb, the Banū Liḥyān, the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq, the Banū Sa'd, the Banū Ghaṭafān and the Banū Tayy.

He kept the Jews of Medina and of Khaybar under close watch through his spies and consequently succeeded in achieving his

goal by destroying their power of resistance.

The Munāfiqūn were a constant headache for the Prophet from within his community but he managed to induce their own brethren from the Ansār to spy against them. Consequently, whenever any one of the Munāfiqūn was reported to be taking part in subversive activities the Prophet carefully countered their measures and managed to avoid any possible loss as in the cases of 'Abdallāh b. Ubayy during the expedition against the Banū al-Mustaliq and the ones who had plotted to assassinate him during the expedition to Tabūk.

He also kept the Muhājirūn and the Ansār, who were his followers, under close watch through his information service in spite of their faithfulness towards him because after all they were human beings.

So far the activities of the Prophet, and his commanders, in the field of espionage during his Medinan career have been discussed in what is generally accepted to be a chronological order. By this discussion it has become obvious that the Prophet made use at one time or another of virtually every mode of intelligence which was available to him in 7th century Arabia. To summarise this discussion, his activities may be mentioned under the following headings but inevitably there is some overlap between certain types of spies.

1. Agents in place

The spies or secret agents posted on a long term basis by the Prophet in or around the enemy territory like Muṣ'ab, al-'Abbās, Ḥusayl b. Nuwayra, the Banū Khuzā'a and the iron-smith may be termed 'agents in place'.

2. Penetration agents

The spies who were sent to the enemy, reached their destination, fulfilled their mission and managed to get back. People such as Ṭalḥa, Sa'īd, 'Adī, Basbas, Anas, Mūnis, Ḥubāb, Madhkūr, Burayda, Zuhayr, Khawwāt, Ḥudhayfa, Shujā'. Busr, 'Ulba', Ḥusayl, and Ibn Abī Ḥadrad may be termed 'penetration agents'.

3. Missionaries

The spies or secret agents sent out to work in the enemy or neutral tribes in the guise of preachers of the new faith such as Muṣ'ab and the people of al-Rajī' may be called missionaries.

4. Ambassadors

The people sent to the enemy whose duties included those of negotiators and spies such as Sa'd b. Mu'ādh, Sa'd b. Ubāda, Usayd b. Ḥudayr and 'Uthmān may be placed under this heading.

5. Relatives

The non-Muslims who had some kind of relationship with someone in the Prophet's ranks and proved to be a source of information about the enemy like al-'Abbās (before his conversion to Islam) and Walīd b. Zuhayr and also the companions of the Prophet who spied on their relatives like 'Umayr b. Sa'īd may be mentioned as relatives.

6. Traders

The people who had to travel to and fro in connection with their trading activities sometimes proved to be a source of information for the Prophet about his enemies. The traders termed sāqita and the one who informed the Prophet about a gathering of the Banū Tha'laba and the Banū Anmār at Dhāt al-Riqā'

may be mentioned under this heading.

7. Casual travellers

They were an important source of information and Yasār, Jabbār and the men who brought the news of the activities of the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq to Medina may be placed under this heading.

8. Traitors

Such persons were a very important source of secret information about the enemy. Simāk and Ghazzāl are examples of this sort of men during the Prophet's career at Medina.

9. Tongues

The water carriers of the Quraysh and the spies of the Banū al-Muṣṭaliq, the Banū Sa'd, the Banū Hawāzin and the Jews of Khaybar when captured and tortured by the companions of the Prophet, revealed their own secrets.

10. Women

There is no evidence that the Prophet employed women for intelligence but they were a tool of the apparatus of the intelligence in his days. For example, Kurz b. Jābir found a clue to the robbers through a woman, Ḥaṭīb had tried to send his letter to Mecca through a woman and 'Adī and Basbas got wind of the caravan of Abū Sufyān through women.

11. Codes

There is not much evidence about the use of codes in the intelligence work during this period. Only the negotiators sent to the Banū Qurayza used codified form to convey their report to the Prophet when they returned to him.

12. Safeguarding Secrets

An important part of espionage work is counter-intelligence

which is to safeguard one's own secrets. The Prophet once gave sealed orders to an expedition leader with the order not to read them until two days later and once sent directions to a commander when he was on his way. This was to prevent the enemy agents at Medina from knowing the purpose of the expeditions. On some occasions the Prophet or his commanders set out in a direction other than the one in which their target lay. On a number of occasions they captured the enemy spies and thus denied the enemy access to information about their activities.

13. Feeding the enemy with false information

On at least three occasions, after the defeat at Uhud, during the siege of Medina and during the campaign of Khaybar, the Prophet or his companions spread false news among the enemy to demoralize them and consequently achieved their goals.

In this way the man who had started his career at Medina as a refugee achieved a unique success in bringing nearly all the Arabs under his banner in a space of a mere ten years and established a state which soon after his death expanded to include a large part of the then known world.

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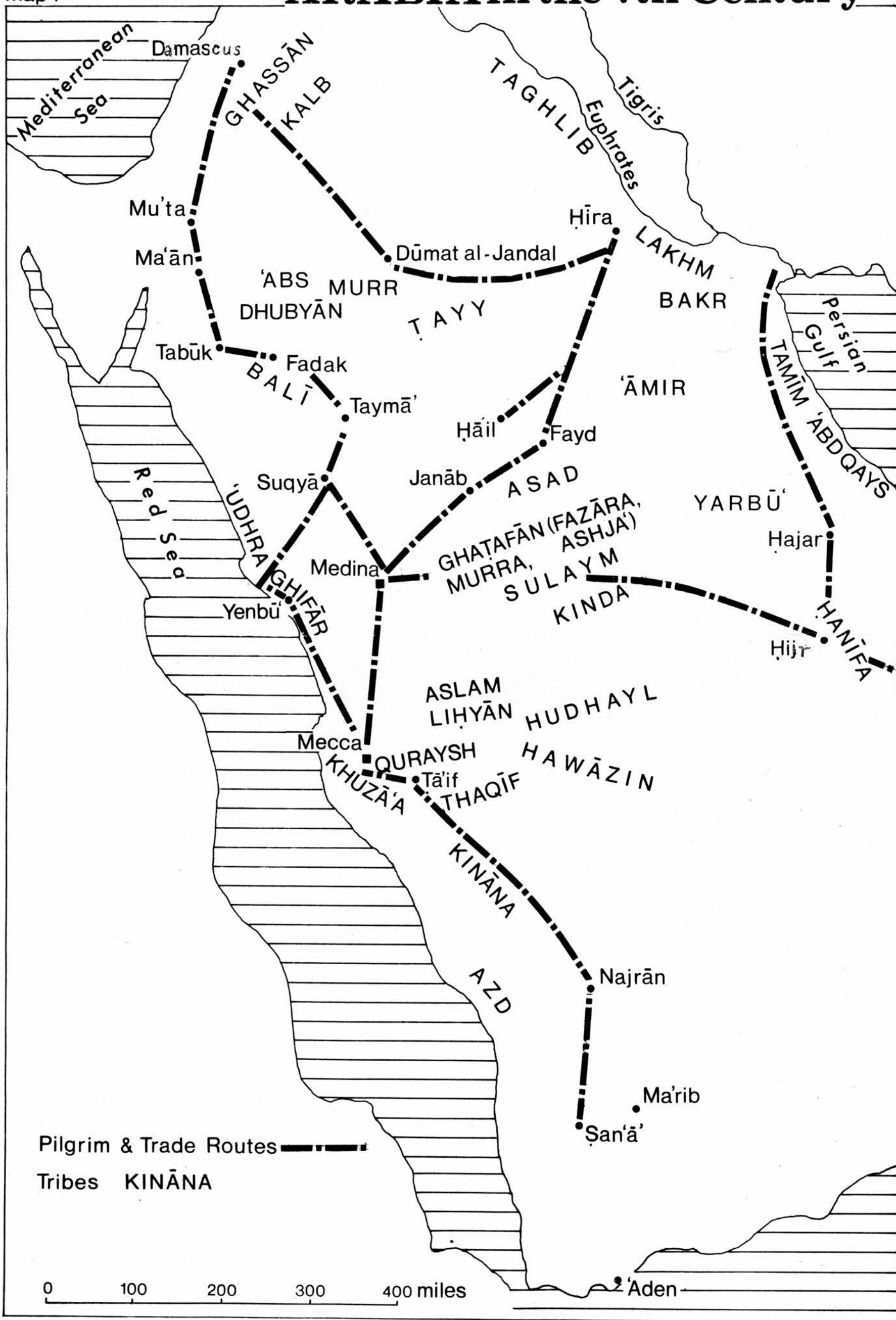
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Map 1

ARABIA in the 7th Century



Map 1a Enlargement of the map of the area of MECCA and MEDINA

